8
未踏召喚：ブラッドサイン
The unexplored summon：blood sign VIII
鎌池和馬
イラスト：依河和希
電撃文庫

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Novel Illustrations

9784048936781

ISBN978-4-04-893678-1
C0193 ¥710E

定価：本体 710円（税別）

KADOKAWA
ASCII MEDIA WORKS
アスキー・メディアワークス

1920193007107

未踏召喚://ブラッドサイン
8
鎌池和馬
イラスト†依河和希

うりゃりゃりゃー！
おりゃりゃりゃりゃ！
オリヴィア＝ハイランド
恭介がかつて救った少女（アリス）の一人。
実はF国のお姫様。
愛歌【あいか】
三大勢力の一角「ガバメント」所属の召喚師。
妹系水着猛獣少女。
ここが！ ここがいいのですかー？ ライガー
今日は その獣臭い体を 隅々までピカピカにしてあげる！
うりー!! シャワーは気持ち良いだろ――!!
ザアー
もうどうにでもしてEYE
そういや あの巨乳は？
リューお姉ちゃんなら さっきその辺に……
ギャアアアッ!!!
緑娘藍【リュウニャンラン】
三大勢力の一角「イリーガル」所属の古道具屋さん。超絶ナイスバディ。
か……株価が……
私の大事な フロント企業が……
年増が 年増らしい 独り言を つぶやきながら 死んでる……！

よーう
恭介ちゃん
毎度おなじみ
入刈太郎だよー
さーて
俺を殺すのは
何度目だったかな？
スタントかな？
影武者かな？
そんな風に
悩んでるう？

白き女王の殺害
それにより
世界中の人々が
信奉する神を失い
暴走をはじめた
女王を失ったことで
生じた混乱を
僕が最小限に
留めてみせよう
ではないか!!
城山恭介［しろやま・きょうすけ］
「フリーダム」に属する当代最強の召喚師。
悲願である「白き女王」討滅をついに果たす。
待って……
にーさま……

メリ
メリ
『色彩なき童女』……
どうして……ッ!
ねえ
お兄ちゃん
ほんとにみんなを
助けることが
できるの……?
大丈夫よ
レイチェルちゃん
なにしろ
私の可愛い娘と
救国の英雄が
タッグを組んで
いるんですもの
オリヴィアと
恭介様の
組み合わせで
ハッピーエンド
以外の展開など
ありえません
シンセアリア=ハイランド
F国君主にして、「ガバメント」アワード913。
通り名は「国家と結婚した花嫁(ノーブルブライド)」。
今に見てなさい
恭介様は
そんなあなたを含む
全てを絶対に
たすけてくれますから

願う
こそ
戦う
こちらこそ
仰せの通りに

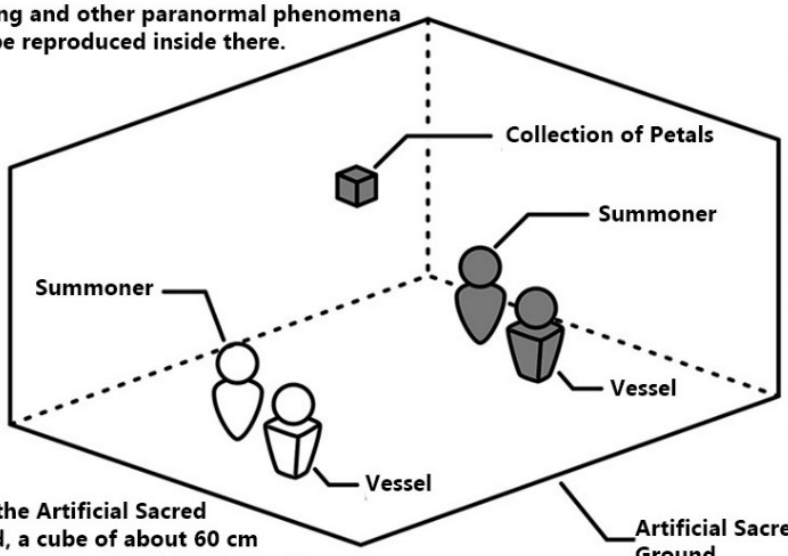
Battle Tutorial

Battle Tutorial of "The unexplored summon://blood-sign"

The Summoning Battle begins when one of the summoners uses an Incense Grenade.

phase 1

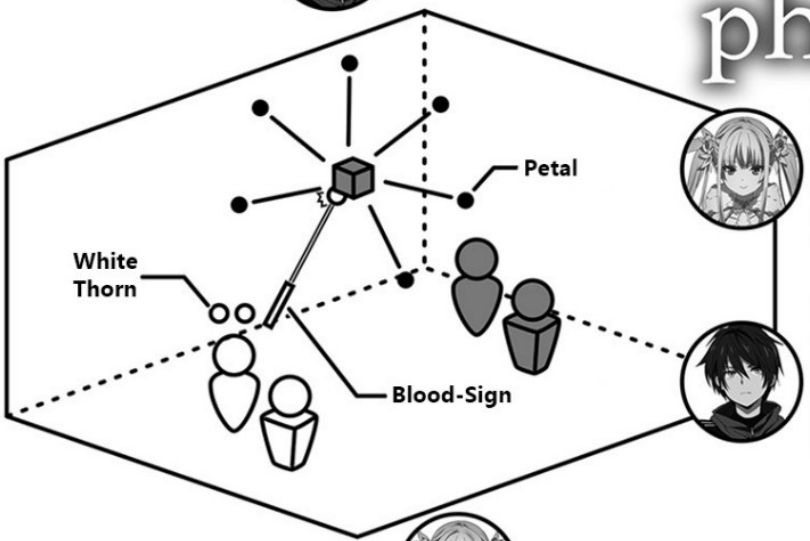
When the Incense Grenade is used, an Artificial Sacred Ground forms around them. Summoning and other paranormal phenomena can only be reproduced inside there.



Inside the Artificial Sacred Ground, a cube of about 60 cm appears at the midpoint between the summoners.

It is a collection of the 216 Petals which are red spheres about the size of an apple.

phase 2



3 white spheres known as White Thorns appear with each summoner. Those are hit with a long staff known as a Blood-Sign and they collide with the Petals.

You hit the Petals with the White Thorns in order to knock them into the spherical Spots that appear in 36 locations inside the Artificial Sacred Ground.

What Petals are hit into the Spots changes what can be summoned.

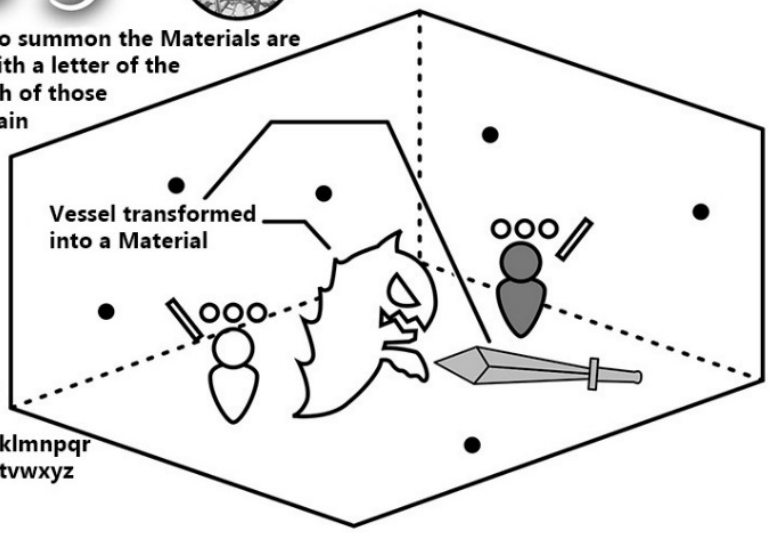
And the vessel's body is used to create...

Battle Tutorial of "The unexplored summon://blood-sign"

phase 3

...a Material. The summoners use them for a fight to the death.

The Petals used to summon the Materials are each engraved with a letter of the alphabet and each of those belongs to a certain Sound Range.



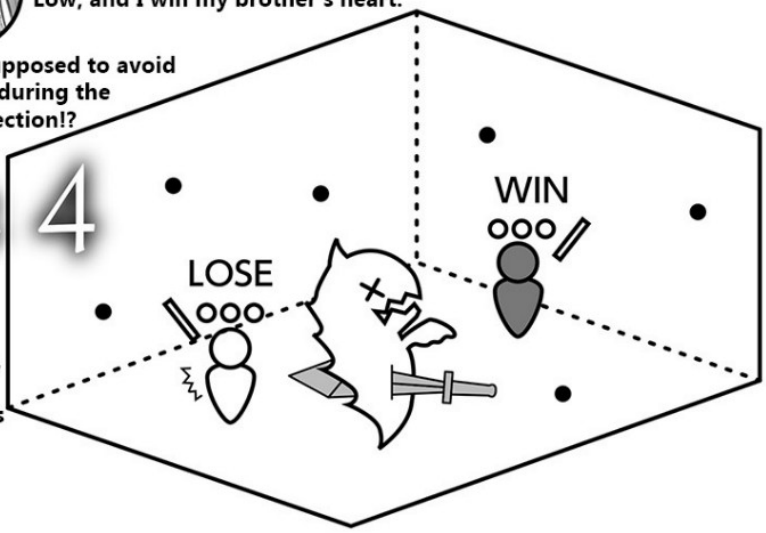
aiueo are vowels and thus the Lowest Sound Range. As for the consonants, bcdfghj are Low, klmnpqr are Middle, and stvwxyz are High.

There are of course rules governing the summoned Materials and they are based on the Petals' rules.

Low wins against High, High wins against Middle, Middle wins against Low, and I win my brother's heart.

Weren't we supposed to avoid making jokes during the explanation section!?

phase 4



And after the vessels transform into Materials, they continued to be updated into new forms as they fight.

The Materials start at Regulation-class. After summoning 100 of those, you gain the right to summon the higher Divine-class. And after summoning 50 of those, you gain the right to summon the even higher Unexplored-class.

The vessel has a core known as their Silhouette. If that is destroyed, the battle ends. The losing summoner and vessel will become dolls that wander around in a stupor.

And that concludes our simple explanation of the Summoning Battle. As a summoner fights more and more battles, they earn more titles known as Awards. And if their number of Awards reaches 1000...hee hee hee. Now, I wonder what happens then.

Phase 1
Upper Cube: Collection of Petals
Left Dark Figure: Summoner
Right Dark Figure: Vessel
Left White Figure: Summoner
Right White Figure: Vessel
Overall Box: Artificial Sacred Ground

K: The Summoning Battle begins when one of the summoners uses an Incense Grenade.
Q: When the Incense Grenade is used, an Artificial Sacred Ground forms around them. Summoning and other paranormal phenomena can only be reproduced inside there.
Q: Inside the Artificial Sacred Ground, a cube of about 60 cm appears at the midpoint between the summoners.
K: It is a collection of the 216 Petals which are red spheres about the size of an apple.

Phase 2
Dark Ball: Petal
White Ball: White Thorn
White Stick: Blood-Sign

Q: 3 white spheres known as White Thorns appear with each summoner. Those are hit with a long staff known as a Blood-Sign and they collide with the Petals.
K: You hit the Petals with the White Thorns in order to knock them into the spherical Spots that appear in 36 locations inside the Artificial Sacred Ground.
Q: What Petals are hit into the Spots changes what can be summoned.
K: And the vessel's body is used to create…

Phase 3
White Monster and Dark Sword: Vessel transformed into a Material

Q: …a Material. The summoners use them for a fight to the death.
K: The Petals used to summon the Materials are each engraved with a letter of the alphabet and each of those belongs to a certain Sound Range.
Q: aiueo are vowels and thus the Lowest Sound Range. As for the consonants, bcdfghj are Low, klmnpqr are Middle, and stvwxyz are High.

K: There are of course rules governing the summoned Materials and they are based on the Petals' rules.
Q: Low wins against High, High wins against Middle, Middle wins against Low, and I win my brother's heart.
K: Weren't we supposed to avoid making jokes during the explanation section!?

Phase 4
K: And after the vessels transform into Materials, they continued to be updated into new forms as they fight.
Q: The Materials start at Regulation-class. After summoning 100 of those, you gain the right to summon the higher Divine-class. And after summoning 50 of those, you gain the right to summon the even higher Unexplored-class.
K: The vessel has a core known as their Silhouette. If that is destroyed, the battle ends. The losing summoner and vessel will become dolls that wander around in a stupor.
Q: And that concludes our simple explanation of the Summoning Battle. As a summoner fights more and more battles, they earn more titles known as Awards. And if their number of Awards reaches 1000…hee hee hee. Now, I wonder what happens then.

Prologue

Hello, it’s me, the defeated Queen!!
Ahh, defeat is such a liberating feeling. I feel free of all responsibility! This is a lovely gift you gave me, brother, so it’s only polite to suck it dry down to the marrow. Okay, time to enjoy my time off!
Brother, has anything changed with you?
Word that a human – and a single individual at that – killed me should have reached the ignorant masses clinging to that puny planet by now. I imagine that is changing some things. Hee hee hee. How do you like the changed world? A world where I, the White Queen, have been defeated should be paradise for you, brother.
Oh?
Oh, oh, oh???
Is there a thought lurking somewhere in your heart, brother? Is there some hope hidden deep down, even if you deny it on the surface?
Some hope that the White Queen will once again make an appearance somewhere?
That the strongest of the strongest will show up to correct the changed world?
Hee hee hee. I have some good news, brother.
I will not get involved this time.
I will say that up front, but you can take that to mean whatever you want. Am I serious, or am I bluffing? Hee hee. I know I can be so indiscriminate when it comes to you, brother, but…yes, I may have been doing too much for you. If you think I will always pop up where you need me, you are sorely mistaken. I think it’s time you relearned just how rare the White Queen is.
Cry, shout, wail, and plead if you like.
But steel yourself for a reality where I will not appear as a matter of course.
Got that, my – dear – brother?

Facts

- The position of the strongest is always filled. But it will not necessarily be the same individual who holds it.

Opening X-01: The Beginning of a Rebellious Phase

“What’s the point if you don’t watch it on July 7? Right, liger?”
“…I said I’m not interested…”
(Opening X-01 Open 08/03 20:05)
The Beginning of a Rebellious Phase

It was shortly after 8 on August 3.
The front door to a top-floor apartment in Toy Dream 35 had just opened.
“Hey, I’m back.”
An adorable girl’s voice spoke fluent Japanese. It belonged to Olivia Highland. She was a small girl of around 12, her long blonde hair was tied in double braids, and she wore a strange outfit that used a school swimsuit, a decorative collar, and a pareo to look almost like outdoor clothing.
Summoners and vessels would change their appearance the further their worldview shifted away from the normal world, but she was also the heir to the throne of Eastern Europe’s Kingdom F. Was it a good thing or a bad thing that people tended to interpret eccentricities as a sign of genius?
Meanwhile…
“…”
“Ah, Onii-chan!”
The girl was clinging to a high school boy named Shiroyama Kyousuke who said nothing at all as he succumbed to exhaustion and threw himself onto the large sofa as soon as he entered the large living room. He stopped moving altogether in a perfect example of sleeping like a log.
The summery 12-year-old in a straw hat refused to accept this, so she hopped on top of Kyousuke’s collapsed body.
She straddled him and bounced her small butt up and down while talking to him.
“C’mon, let’s play! We haven’t played nearly enough and we’ve been doing everything you wanted to do! You promised on the plane we would play a whole bunch once the work was done!”
“U-uohhh…ohhh…”
“Who do you think you are having your way with me and going to sleep once you’re satisfied!? You’re being too selfish today, Onii-chan!!”

But no matter what his contracted Alice said, the Freedom Award 903 summoner only groaned like a zombie. How could he just drop dead like this? He was being just as rotten as a father who wore himself out working during the week and neglected to spend time with his family on the weekends.
“Uuh.”
Olivia puffed out her small cheeks, but the zombie remained a zombie. He was not going to move. And for better or for worse, she was a very curious girl. You could also say she had a short attention span. She looked around in search of something else to grab her attention and spotted her next toy.
“Unyah! Hello again, liger!”
After getting down from the hunk of rotten flesh that was Shiroyama Kyousuke, the blonde double braid girl’s face lit up, she spread her arms, and she charged toward a 5m monster. That monster had devoured 40kg of raw meat – which was more than Olivia weighed – today, but there was no fear in the girl’s eyes. The white liger was curled up just like a cat, so she leaped toward her neck and rubbed her cheek against her giant face.
“Rub, rub, rub. Did you miss me, liger?”
And Aika, the summoner and owner of the 5m beast she was using as a sofa, breathed an exasperated sigh. Thus spoke the white and green striped bikini:
“Can’t you see the liger’s tail is between her legs, dummy? And her ears are flattened down. She’s trying to look small cause she’s afraid of you.”
“Eh? That’s not true. We’re best friends, aren’t we?”
Olivia lightly bit the white liger’s ear with no apparent fear for her life, but…
“Hm? …Liger, why do you smell so bad? Have you not been taking enough baths while I was gone?”
That 5m body blatantly gave a start. She jumped up enough to push Aika into the air from below.
Yes. Due to the way their fur worked, felines generally did not like getting wet. You could not just give them a quick shower like with a canine.
“Ora! You’re a girl, liger, so didn’t I tell you you have to take care of yourself!? This calls for a thorough scrubbing!!”
“You’re just applying human reasoning here. How is this any different from those old ladies that like dressing up their cats? Then again, it is true the liger was starting to smell…”
The liger looked up at her owner with the damp eyes of a kitten, but since Aika also supported the idea, she was in real trouble. The monster pitifully shrank down, but the girls grabbed her neck and guided her toward a fairly large bath.
“Come to think of it, where’s Lu Onee-chan? We came here so she could cook for us.”

“That old lady had this dead look on her face while muttering some old lady-ish nonsense about stock prices, so she’s probably in some room or another curled up in an old lady-ish ball.”
“Eh? Then what are we going to eat!? I thought we were going to get Lu Onee-chan’s Chinese cooking!”
“Plastic wrap and the fridge are two wonderful inventions for shut-ins. Also microwaves.”
Olivia and Aika were already wearing swimsuits, so there was no need to strip off their clothing in the changing room. They immediately opened the door to the bath proper and discovered a drowned corpse. The bathtub was the size of a small pool and a dead-eyed Lu Niang Lan was sprawled out in it like a jellyfish with her head resting on the edge.
“Th-the stock prices. My precious front company…”
The girls ignored the white-eyed old lady and grabbed the shower nozzle. Every last bit of the white liger’s fur was bristling at this point, but Olivia and Aika worked together to mercilessly soak her with the fierce spray.
“Rub! Don’t showers feel great, liger!? Rub, rub!!”
“Cold. This hasn’t heated up yet…”
The bottle labeled “for cat fur” lined up along with the shampoo, rinse, and conditioner was a sign of Aika’s true celebrity quality. Aika pushed down the head of the pump bottle to fill her palm with a thick liquid with no artificial scents, she pressed her palms together to work up a lather, and she began an attack on the wet liger’s large body.
It was a testament to the white liger’s samurai-like patience that no blood was drawn. If you ignored such a large animal’s nature and forced it to do something like this, even a professional zookeeper could get eaten. Do not try this at home, even if you do find a 5m beast in the bath.
“Oh, the liger just relaxed and her eyes are melting. See, there’s nothing wrong with taking a bath.”
“I’m pretty sure these ‘just get it over with’ eyes are a sign she simply doesn’t have it in her to resist, but that’s fine with me if it will get her nice and clean.”
After that extremely apathetic comment, Aika glanced over to the side.
To a shut-in girl who lived alone, the bath was her second paradise. She had plenty of money to burn, so she had thoroughly remodeled the place. The bath was fully air-conditioned, the large bathtub had jet sprays, you could place an order and have a waterproof robot on wheels bring you a drink or a popsicle, and there was a giant flat-screen TV filling one whole wall. Instead of using a remote, she had it set up to turn on and change channels in response to her eye movements.
“Huh? Why are they running a special on the July Betrayers movie? Is that not out in Japan yet?”
“You can be a smug westerner if you like, but you’re not going to impress me by bragging about this. I have no interest at all in Hollywood’s heroes in full-body tights.”

“What’s the point if you don’t watch it on July 7? Right, liger?”
“…I said I’m not interested…”
The controls were set to Aika, so she rapidly flipped from channel to channel. She had it set up for terrestrial, satellite, cable, and internet broadcast. She ended up on a variety show that simply provided the week’s top played online videos. It was basically the same as an aggregation site, so it seemed wrong that producers and performers were being paid to do what amateurs did.
The top ranked videos were as follows:
“A powerful explosion rocks South America’s San Carlos Cathedral! Watch the shocking footage of a black-market tank crashed into the top of the religious institution used as a front to sell a dangerous powder!!”
“Crush the Eastern European smart gang!! This fearsome criminal group worships a mysterious white goddess and bought a satellite and stealth bombers off the black market, but watch as their convoy is blown up piece by piece!!”
“A borderless mobile cult for a new age? What is truth behind the mysterious proselytizing fleet that uses the world’s largest aircushion ship and leaves contamination in its wake wherever it stops? Now that the ship has broken in two and sunk, divers are working to explore it!!”
The world was as dangerous as ever.
Lu Niang Lan’s old lady comments about stock prices showed no sign of ending.
Bikini Girl Aika sighed lightly and then spoke to the inexhaustible Olivia.
“How much of this were you and Onii-chan involved in?”
“*Hmm, all of it that had something to do with the White Queen.*” Olivia’s voice was carefree and she was oblivious to the white foam on her cheek as she innocently rubbed the 5m mass of muscles. “You remember Houbi Village in July? A lot happened there. And *since the Queen was killed*, organizations, groups, cabals, companies, conglomerates, religions, schools, armies, and everyone else have started to go nuts. I’m so worn out after going around putting out all those fires with Onii-chan.”
“You have some nerve saying that as one of the people who evangelized the Queen. So is this the turning point between the White Queen’s third style and the Colorless Little Girl’s fourth style?”
“It’s not that simple. In Alaska, all marine products are said to have come from the flesh and blood of a sacrificed maiden, so they’ve apparently started drowning lots of girls in the ocean below the ice to breathe life back into the Queen who supposedly provided the blessings of the water. But Onii-chan is going around stopping all of those things.”
“Ugh. That does sound like him…”
“Ngah! How many countries do you think I’ve been to today? I don’t even know because we’ve gone back and forth across the international date line so many times!! We’ve been hopping all across the world map for battles, battles, and more battles just like in an old fighting game. And he promised

to play with me a whole bunch once it was over, but he collapsed instead! I can't believe him!!"
And while that chaos affected the world economy, the villains around the world who – for better or for worse – supported the financial markets were being crushed one after another by *a sudden intruder*. The rapid fluctuation this brought was unpredictable by any automatic investment program or expert financial analyst. That explained why Lu Niang Lan was floating in someone else's bath like a jellyfish.
That was the state of things in the outside world.
But surprisingly, none of those were the top ranked video being introduced on TV.
That spot belonged to another:
"Leaked complaints from the cast of July Betrayers? What is the truth of this mysterious behind-the-scenes footage seemingly shot on a smartphone!?"
Silence followed.
This was obviously a guerilla campaign set to match the month-delayed Japanese release, but it was played with a loud fanfare. If it was really shot on a hidden camera, it was unlikely the sick looking bearded star would be looking right at the camera. And the "source" listed in the corner of the screen simply gave the movie's distribution company. If this was actually accepted as an amusing leaked video, the producer would probably be fired.
Finally, the girls spoke to each other.
"…This world really has gone crazy." "Either that or the world is at peace."

Facts

- Shiroyama Kyousuke has maintained his contract with Olivia Highland. Now that the Queen has been successfully killed, he is traveling around the world crushing Queen worshiping groups and organizations to keep the chaos to a minimum.
- The world is in conflict over whether to side with the White Queen or the Colorless Little Girl. More than just a turning point, a fair number of groups are starting irregular ceremonies other than the Blood-Sign method in an attempt to bring back the White Queen.
- After so many battles in quick succession, even Shiroyama Kyousuke is exhausted.
- After losing a large amount of money she uses to function in the underworld, Lu Niang Lan has completely rotted away.
- The white liger has mastered the path of the samurai. She is a true warrior who can remain calm even when two innocent swimsuit girls mercilessly scrub her entire body.

Opening X-02: Window-Shattering Youth

“Olivia? Why are you backing away so quickly? Hey!”
“Onii-chan, you wouldn’t understand since you’re a freak who only has standards when it comes to cereal!”
(Opening X-02 Open 08/03 17:05)
Window-Shattering Youth

Now let us move back in time a bit to see why Shiroyama Kyousuke was tired.

It was past 5 in the Northern Australian city of Iron Range.
“Pant, pant!!”
A middle-aged man named Leonardo Pounds was soaked in sweat despite the office’s nice air-conditioning. He gasped for breath as he knocked over a thick bookcase. The safe on the wall behind it used a dial. Everything tended to be digital in modern times, but that man knew from experience that you could only trust the products of craftsmen when it really mattered. He turned the old-fashioned dial, opened the thick door, and pulled out a duralumin case. It was essentially the same as a disaster bag for earthquakes. However, he had prepared it for manmade disasters on the level of wars, so it contained a fake passport, a list of foreign bank accounts, cash in multiple currencies for bribing policemen in a pinch, a notebook full of secret contact points that would connect him to people who dealt in less-than-legal goods and services, a ring of keys for hideouts around the world, a cellphone and laptop modified to be untraceable, an assortment of white powders he could not admit to owning, a plastic handgun and cartridges that would slip past a metal detector, etc., etc. The fact that Leonardo had all this prepared should tell you what kind of disaster he was prepping for and what kind of world he lived in.
Anyone who assumed he was with one of Illegal’s criminal organizations was someone with a kind and honest heart.
He was actually part of a new organization that belonged to Government, the world police.

That might be understandable if you had done some thorough research into the state of monasteries in the middle ages. But that leads only to regret, so it is not recommended.
Instead of a phone, the middle-aged man shouted into a radio that was reinforced with encryption.
“Kevin!! Gather a few sets of disposable summoners and get them out there to slow the enemy down. I’m going to release the final lock, activate the gas, and escape. I need time, not money, so buy me that time even if it means spending some lives!!”
The framed symbol of their cult tilted and fell to the floor with the sound of shattering glass, but the middle-aged man paid it no heed. That was no more than some scribblings made by an advertising agency’s designer to include a few colors, shapes, and symbols that would capture the human heart.
Leonardo had no religious faith whatsoever.
He had come to understand the simple fact that a flea market could be used to create a religion.
What people wanted or no longer wanted revealed their individual desires and anxieties. It was like a guidebook to what someone would have to whisper to them to make them think it was a miracle.
He had led them to believe in god.
He had led them to hand over all of their possessions.
He had led them to continue following his teachings even if he died.
(I would have had heaven on earth if I’d managed to cross the final line and taught them I could save the world if I had sex with all the young women, so why the hell did it have to fall apart now!?)
…In truth, Leonardo himself was not as charismatic as he claimed. It might have been amusing if this had been a planned collapse. But frequent appearances of the White Queen (even if normal people could not retain any proper memories or awareness of her) had gathered anxiety and popularity as two sides of the same coin. And when word arrived that the Queen had been killed, something had exploded. It had crossed a line.
The entire office…no, the entire headquarters shook violently. The middle-aged man’s shoulder slammed into the wall and he endured the pain as he threw open the door with the duralumin case still in his arms.
Outside the door was a complex labyrinth made of sturdy steel.
He heard pounding footsteps as the obedient summoners and vessels made their way outside.
“…”
As evidenced by how he naturally held his breath, Leonardo did not want to be found by his own elites any more than by the enemy. He had no intention of staying here. He would let those hard workers form the suicide squad while he made a quick escape. There were some young women in the cult with breasts and butts he so badly wanted to claim as his own, but he unfortunately had to abandon them here.

Since he had used the form of a religion instead of a corporation or a bloodline, he could never show any weakness. No matter how attractive those breasts and butts were, if he took them with him during this desperate situation, they could awaken from their dream at any time. And he would really prefer to not have them stab him. Luckily, he had proven that his methodology worked. He had memorized the process. If he swallowed his tears here, said goodbye to those breasts and butts, and escaped to a new life, he could rebuild a community from scratch and gain peace of mind.

(I can't have any damage from my past when I do that. I need to blow it all up and leave no trace behind. I'm getting a fresh start, so it has to truly be from nothing. I don't want any debt. If I don't start a new self from scratch, I'll just be tripping myself up.)

The turbine that provided thrust was exposed on the surface, but the engine room that contained the key to blowing it up was deep inside. And it was not set up for remote control. His own demands were getting in his way. And since he was a terrible person, he clicked his tongue like it was someone else's fault. He slid past the thick metal door and into the engine room that was full of thick pipes and machines that looked like metal guts. He removed a panel that used four different types of screws, none of which were a normal Phillips head or flat head, inserted the analog key, and typed in a 16-digit code.

After seeing the green light turn red, he removed the key with a satisfied look.

Unlike in a movie or drama, there was no obvious digital countdown. For one thing, no one but Leonardo needed to know about the countdown. The believers who had stayed behind because of their faith in him could continue doing their duty without a doubt in their mind until it all blew up around them.

When the time came, a flammable gas made by vaporizing fuel would spray from all of the sprinklers and all trace of every person and thing here would be erased in one giant fireworks show. Instead of setting up small explosives all around the structure, the plan was to turn the entire space into a giant bomb. Thus, it was impossible for anything to survive.

"Kevin, I've finished! I'm on my way to the heliport, so get the engine warmed up so we can leave right away!!"

Another rumbling and tremor shook the world.

He staggered but managed to regain his balance, left the engine room, avoided the pounding footsteps of his allies, and ran up a narrow metal stairway.

He tackled open the metal door leading outside.

He found the clear blue sky and sunshine of Australia. A vortex of heat pushed in at him. Even if the Southern Hemisphere's seasons were opposite of the Northern Hemisphere, this harbor city was closer to the equator than Hawaii or Guam. But the middle-aged man did not see the rooftop of a high-

rise building in front of him. This was an extraordinarily large aircushion ship that measured more than 200m long. A large balloon was opened below and the power of air was used to keep the giant ship moving across land or sea. The heliport on the deck was Leonardo Pounds's goal.
"Pant, pant…"
He gasped for breath, but also looked away from his obvious goal. He could not help but look.
Hell on earth lay before him.
He saw the magic king of Norse mythology whose name begins with an O and who offered up one eye at a spring.
He saw the trident king of Greek mythology whose name begins with a P and who rules the sea.
He saw the light king of Celtic mythology whose name begins with an L and who excels at using projectiles.
He saw the black king of Slavic mythology whose name begins with a C and who rules over death and the underworld.
Outside the aircushion ship, several beings had appeared on the concrete of the 2nd dock in Iron Range's commerce area. They were all Divine-class and they were Materials who held dreadful power at the center of their respective mythologies. Viewed from a different perspective, they could be seen as a treasure trove of material on what Leonardo should make people think of when he used his tricks.
But that was not the center of the hell he saw.
They were cut down, crushed, broken, or suppressed.
The Blood-Sign Summoning Ceremony had changed everything.
He knew that, but how many people would believe that a single individual could do all this?
Unexplored-class. Cost: 20. Sound Range: Low.
The "Red-Eyed" Lady who Sees Through All Sin and Calamity (f a – a o – a b – e i – f j – c i b – b – d u – a – e i f).
She looked a lot like a female Oni of Eastern folklore. Her long, beautiful hair and the two horns protruding from her forehead gave her an oriental charm. She wore a red kimono and innerwear resembling a one-piece swimsuit. Countless gears of varying sizes fit together behind her and they guided her hair to different parts of the world like a loom. The middle-aged man placed his sexual desire at top priority when making any decision, but the divinity inside her left even him hesitant to make her a target of lust. Not only could she prophesy all things to always make an accurate attack, but if she merely opened her closed eyes, it was said she would forcibly determine the target's fate. Even the gods of legend would fail to see their fate and be swallowed up before they could dodge. Faced with one of the Unexplored-class Materials known as the Three, even gods of death and war could not make use of their powers.
"There he is…"

But it was not even the Red Lady that made the middle-aged man gulp when he saw them.
He was looking at the boy who stood by her side.
That veteran summoner was calm and composed as he controlled one of the Three.
“I had a feeling you would show up, *Queen Executioner*!!”
Even at such a great distance, he could tell something the instant their eyes met: the owner of those rusty eyes was a true berserker. He would show no mercy whatsoever. He was not just a wild beast or a faceless unmanned weapon. He felt like an incarnation of ruthlessness itself.
Leonardo Pounds lost what calm he had previously felt.
He ran across the aircushion ship’s deck and threw aside the duralumin case that was weighing him down. That was his valuable social lifeline for after he escaped, but his instincts were screaming that this was not the time to worry about what happened after he escaped. It was all for naught if he was killed before he escaped.
“Pant, pant, pant!!”
(Dammit. What was all that nonsense about the White Queen being the strongest of the strongest? It’s all meaningless if she gets herself killed. I have to redo everything and build up the symbols from the ground up. Dammit, dammit, dammit. What am I supposed to do? It’s all fading away. My life of debauchery is fading away. What do I do now? And I had finally completed the ultimate method of safely abducting women. Oh, it’s no use. I can’t think. I just want to have sex so bad!!)
Luckily, that frighteningly effective summoner had yet to board the aircushion ship. The vanguard was obediently fighting on the harbor where it was docked. Artificial Sacred Grounds were powerful, but they also anchored the summoner and vessel in place. It was all over if that boy made it here, but Leonardo could still escape.
He was almost to the helicopter that was waiting with the main rotor turning.
He made it in time.
Perhaps because he was freed from so much tension, the dam in his head broke even though he had not sniffed anything yet today. After taking a step into divine territory while sober, psychedelic colors danced wildly in his brain.
(Yes, this is my chance. The White Queen has lost, but I can use this. I can say the new strongest of the strongest will reside in any woman who has sex with me. Yes, that’s it!! This will work. I’m still winning. Hardship only makes you stronger. Once I get the details worked out, I can start spreading these new teachings. And I can make up for being forced to wait by having sex, sex, sex, and more sex!! Ah, it just hit me. I can hire a famous songwriter and make a sex festival dance. Yahoo, yahoo, sex, sex! Ah ha ha! God, I’m so hard just thinking about it! I’m still the best and I’m still unbeatable!!!!!)

“Bwah!!”
The middle-aged man rushed toward the helicopter and naturally made for the rear door for passengers. He was having trouble breathing but managed to raise his voice.
“Sorry about the wait, Kevin! The great Leonardo is here! I’ll praise you for holding back and not going off early. I’ll never call you a quick shot again. Okay, now get flying!! It’s time for that sweet release after holding back for so, so, so long! We can redo this together. To start with, let’s set our sights on a pool crammed full of naked women. Like the world’s most wonderful rush-hour train car! Screw this up and its back to Chicago’s back alleys for the both of us! You don’t want to go back to dressing up like a woman to lure people in for me to threaten with a gun, do you!? Then get working!!”
But there was no response.
Does he want some kind of reward? wondered the middle-aged man with a frown, but that was not the case.
With a horribly sticky sound, the lump of flesh sitting in the pilot’s seat crumpled to the side.
What in the world had happened? The convulsing figure’s face was so badly covered in red and black that it was unclear where the eyes, nose, or mouth were.
“Eh? Ah?”
Leonardo did not even feel the proper sense of danger.
He was simply confused.
(Who did this to Kevin? Him? The Queen Executioner? No, he still wasn’t on the ship last I saw him. He couldn’t have gotten here so soon. An ambush? No, this is bad. These depressions look a lot like a Blood-Sign tip. Was he jabbed with that flat tip? This is bad, bad, bad!! This isn’t even about the Summoning Ceremony anymore!!!)
More than the clear threat approaching him, he wanted to avoid breathing the same air as that disturbing mass of flesh and blood. Leonardo Pounds had used flea markets to design a cult, but it was an extremely primitive sense of disgust that bound his soul right now.
And that was why he misjudged the threat.
Just as he reached for the door to leave the helicopter, something broke through the helicopter’s even-thicker glass like it was thin paper.
An object with flat tip mercilessly approached his face: a Blood-Sign. The fact that it would not kill him instantly like a spear actually made it an even more ruthless attack, but did the middle-aged man even manage to see it before it hit?
The first attack crushed the bridge of his nose.
He rolled the other way as if torn from the door he had grabbed at, he hit his back, and then the second attack arrived. He shook his head in protest, so his right cheekbone was broken from a blow powerful enough to knock him out the other door where his girth fell onto the heliport.
“Bwah, bghee!?”

While collapsed and curled up, he reached for his own face and trembled in his heart when he found it had been horribly misshapen. His chin had been shifted to the side so that his top teeth and bottom teeth no longer fit together. Was he lucky or unlucky that there was no mirror here? His mind returned to the image of Kevin's red and black face as he convulsed in the pilot's chair. The attacker – the Queen Executioner – showed no mercy. He would "process" Leonardo as if preparing to cook him.
The middle-aged man's entire body shook when he heard some footsteps that should not have been here.
Something was circling around toward him.
(A-are you kidding me…?)
There was something there. There was definitely something there. Leonardo had poured his all into studying the Blood-Sign method for the inappropriate purposes of using that paranormal system to satisfy his own desires, but he could not explain how this threat had arrived at the heliport.
(Did he release the Artificial Sacred Ground that pins the summoner and vessel to the ground like a powerful anchor? But that would mean giving up his Unexplored-class and finding himself surrounded by Divine-classes without his protective circle. Did he ignore all of that and make it here!?)
The threat was well past anything he could calculate by this point.
He felt the pure terror of facing a formless ghost, like a young child fearfully peering into the darkness.
"Ah, abh. Abfhh…"
He knew nothing about them, but they knew everything about him.
They really were a ghost.
The bloody middle-aged man was certain they knew he had planned to take advantage of the White Queen's defeat to start a new cult and that he would try to prey on all the young women he wanted when he did so.
He heard something slowly swishing through the air.
It was the sound of someone casually spinning a long, long Repliglass stick.
Just for now, that boy's Blood-Sign was not a divine-yet-blasphemous ceremonial tool. It was no more than a ruthless tool for processing a human body by primitively crushing the flesh and smashing the bones. There was no room for otherworldly beings to intervene.
The middle-aged man lay on the heliport in a daze. Simply in a daze.
He moved his trembling head to look up at the ghost whose back was to the sun. And that berserker with rusted eyes spoke.
"I went to the trouble of defeating the strongest, so don't go around twisting everything yourselves now…"
He was Freedom Award 903, Alice (with) Rabbit.
And his icy voice seemed to reject the entire path he had built up to this point.
"…Keep it up and I'll kill you, you goddamn cultist."
The Queen Executioner produced a new form of art.

The heliport looked like an entire can of toxic paint had been dumped on it to form a red crescent moon. At one end, a middle-aged man convulsed with his face against the deck and his butt sticking up, but the rusty-eyed boy in a red and black hoodie and track suit pants did not even glance in his direction.
Half of the world's conflict was related to the White Queen and Shiroyama Kyousuke had helped cause that. He wanted to resolve what problems he could, but they just kept growing more and more twisted.
He knew the feeling was unreasonable, but it was starting to piss him off.
Some small footsteps approached that annoyed grim reaper who rested a Blood-Sign on his shoulder.
"Onii-chaaaan."
It was Olivia Highland.
That girl had entered into a contract as Kyousuke's vessel.
She wore something like a metal bag carried by a thick chain draped diagonally across her body. It was actually a giant padlock that psychologically bound her as a vessel. It jangled as she clung to the blood-splattered boy without hesitation.
"I'm kind of tired," she said.
"It seems a self-destruct device was activated, so we should get away from the ship. I have no problem with the cult's mobile base blowing up, so there's no real reason to deactivate it."
"Aren't there still people onboard?"
"Don't worry. If we tie up their battered leader and drag him behind a car, they'll follow."
"Hmm," said Olivia like she did not really care.
She may have had no interest in the fate of some strange old man.
"More importantly, we're in Australia, so let's get something to eat, Onii-chan!"
Since this bloody scene did nothing to dampen her hunger, you could say Olivia was a true vessel.
"That's fine, but are there any famous Australian dishes? Like something you can only eat here?"
"Hm? Beef maybe???"
"That's an ingredient, not a dish."
Even now, bursting sounds were ringing out in the distance.
With Olivia still clinging to his waist, Kyousuke swung his Blood-Sign like a baseball bat to hit the bolts and nuts he scooped up from the floor. Before the summoners and vessels in the harbor could plot a comeback, he "sniped" them one after another to knock them unconscious.
While continuing to unilaterally hit them with his 1000 fungoes from hell, Kyousuke held his smartphone in his other hand and viewed a blog by a housewife who used a form of English distinct from that of England or America.

“Let’s see. With more than 80% of its territory taken up by a vast desert, Australia is known for its insect dishes that combine aboriginal knowledge with cutting-edge nutritional science.”
“Eh?”
“Worms, caterpillars, and ants are favored because they are nonvenomous, have no strong flavor, and reproduce easily. Eating bugs has gathered the attention of the wealthy the world over as a next generation source of protein needed to survive an age of famine brought on by global warming and overpopulation, but roach cakes made from the giant burrowing cockroach (known to be the largest in the world) can be easily made by anyone with a blender and an oven. It is a unique Australian-…Olivia? Why are you backing away so quickly? Hey!”
“Onii-chan, you wouldn’t understand since you’re a freak who only has standards when it comes to cereal!”
While enjoying himself like that, Kyousuke continued sniping the cult’s elites from a distance before they could throw a new Incense Grenade.
Then he saw the top trending online news listed outside of the blog article:
“The Toy Dream Company is supposed to spread hopes and dreams around the world, but have they posted a pro-war video? Has a Silver Resource War between America and the East Europe Axis finally begun? The suspicious Missing Princess, that mobile VFX studio made from a remodeled cruise ship, is scheduled to stop at Toy Dream 35 soon.”
“…”
Shiroyama Kyousuke sighed.
There were a few different methods for choosing online advertisements, but this seemed to be based on search rankings. Vertical and horizontal banners were set up to guide you to a dedicated page on a video sharing site.
No.
At this point, one had to question whether the search rankings were even accurate. Without even mentioning DDoS attacks, there were plenty of techniques for sending in a ton of access data to increase a visitor counter or number of viewers.
Still.
This was far greater than a small cult.
It was the United States, the world’s greatest superpower.
Even something on that level was distorted, bent, and twisted.
It might not be as direct, but not even defeating the Queen had freed the people of the world. In fact, they were unable to accept that she had lost, so chaos and panic were spreading.
For better or for worse, a powerful force had been drawing the 7 billion people on the planet toward a single point, but now they were beginning to separate once more.
An age of chaos had begun.
This was likely another part of that.

The Toy Dream Company itself was a normal international corporation that did not belong to Government, Illegal, or Freedom, but it had gathered items and documents related to mysteries around the world in search of subjects for their children's books. It was entirely possible that they had unknowingly come into contact with information related to the White Queen.

So it was also possible that her death or defeat had knocked something out of order.

"Olivia."

"Never mind, never mind. I'm not hungry at all! I'm just fine with a burger you could find anywhere in the world!! A-a consistent flavor is just the best, isn't it!? Isn't it!?"

"That's perfect then. We're going to Japan next."

"…What?"

"Our target is the world's largest VFX studio that's docking at Toy Dream 35 as a ship. I won't let them guide us toward war by shifting public opinion like a seesaw. Let's find out just what Toy Dream is up to."

Olivia's mouth flapped wordlessly.

And when she saw the seriousness in Kyousuke's eyes, she just about grew tearful and her throat trembled.

"I don't want to!! How many countries do you think we've visited today alone? I don't care if it's in a tent or a car! I just want to get some sleep!!"

"A civilian Repliglass supersonic plane takes two hours, so you can rest on the way there."

Facts

- The White Queen and the Colorless Little Girl tend to gather the most attention, but the rest of the Unexplored-class also boast extraordinary power. The Divine-class can be explained using existing mythologies and religions, so they do not stand a chance.
- The Artificial Sacred Ground remains in place until the battle is over or the 10-minute limit has been reached, so Kyousuke must have swiftly defeated the enemies before his eyes and canceled the Artificial Sacred Ground without using his Chain.
- Shiroyama Kyousuke used an unthinkable path to take a shortcut from the dock to the aircushion boat's dock. He likely used his Blood-Sign like he was pole vaulting, but the details are unknown.
- The White Queen's defeat is known around the world. The end of her undefeated legacy has caused all sorts of chaos in both the surface and hidden worlds.
- One side effect of the Queen's execution is the rise of talk about a Silver Resource War between America and the East Europe Axis.
- The Toy Dream Company specializes in making movies out of children's books and fairy tales using their own unique interpretations and they spread hopes and dreams around the world, but they have begun showing approval toward the aforementioned war. That should be enough to see how deep the world's chaos runs.

Stage 01: Welcome to the Media Celebrity Life

“…What should we do, Onii-chan?”
“We break our way through and run away.”
(Stage 01 Open 08/04 09:00)
Welcome to the Media Celebrity Life

Part 1

“This Chinese rice porridge is so good.”
“This abalone rice porridge is so good.”
The restaurants in C Block’s Chinatown were not yet open, but Shiroyama Kyousuke and Olivia Highland had still met someone there. While serving them a breakfast that looked simple but was actually a lot of trouble to make, Lu Niang Lan sighed in her red modified China dress.
She ran a secondhand store, so she had used an acquaintance’s supplies instead of her own.
She began speaking while finding the cicada cries to be far too loud already.
“Kyousuke-chan, you’ve been acting very wild lately. Is this a rebellious phase?”
“Lu-san, I had hoped to get this information out of you yesterday, but my entire schedule has been thrown off because you were collapsed in Aika’s bath.”
“Eh heh heh. Don’t you dare talk about that when you caused the wild global financial fluctuation people have started calling Black August. Do I need to give you a firsthand lesson in how my hidden weapons work? Eh heh heh heh heh…”
Lu Niang Lan hung her head and let out some endless dark laughter, but stocks and the like were none of Kyousuke’s concern. But as a capable young woman, she continued smoothly working at preparing the tea.
Kyousuke added some chopped pickled vegetables to accent the flavor of his fish stock rice porridge.
“I’ve already transferred the money to your account, so give me my money’s worth of information,” he said.
“Y’know, that’s a drop in the bucket compared to the losses the entire organization has-…sigh, never mind. I guess I just have to work through my jobs one at a time. …Yes, chaos is an opportunity for my line of work. You can’t let this beat you, Lu Niang Lan. I can still ride this wave.”
With that, she pulled a small notepad from her cleavage.
Her shoulders were not quite at the same height, so she must have been crossing her long legs below the table. That was all it was, but it increased her relaxed allure. When taking a selfie, the slightest difference in angle could have a great effect on the impression people got from your face. Her behavior as an assassin had so permeated her body that she would make herself look nice without even meaning to.

“First of all, let’s talk about the Silver Resource War.”
“It’s an impressive-sounding name, but it doesn’t actually exist, does it?”
“There’s a reason it was given that kind of name. It’s a war that is ‘about to happen’ because a Euro lobbyist group has been pestering the US Congress about making it happen. So they couldn’t afford to give it a negative image.”
“The ‘resource war’ part doesn’t give it a negative image?”
“It didn’t have that name originally.” The modified China dress beauty breathed a sigh of exasperation and brushed her long black hair off of her cheek. “It began with the Global Sharing movement. Materials would be taken from resource countries and combined with the energy-efficient tech of developed countries to extract energy as efficiently as possible. It was the ultimate version of a win-win situation where everyone was happy.”
Olivia looked troubled by this.
“Am I behind the times? Because I’ve never heard of that.”
“You shouldn’t have. The instant it was announced at a press conference, it was criticized as a global colonization plan, so the name was erased from the White House’s website less than half a day later. They wanted to make sure no one ever heard of it again.”
“So did the government go crying to Toy Dream next?”
“It’s only been two weeks since the Queen was killed, so the world works fast, doesn’t it?”
A soft clunk rang out.
Lu Niang Lan had taken advantage of the table blocking their view to remove her shoes.
The modified China dress beauty breathed a relaxed and sweet breath.
“The Silver Resource War is a negative campaign name it was given during the online criticism. Silver refers to the perpetual snow in the beautiful mountains of Eastern Europe. But Toy Dream did not bother to get rid of that name. They knew that wouldn’t be possible, so they instead prominently worked it into their promotional video and twisted the already established name to mean something else.”
“You mean like how ‘incredible’ can be used to mean incredibly bad or incredibly good?”
“More or less. It’s kind of frightening. The Silver Resource War name was spread as a way to protest war, but when ignorant people look online now, it instead looks like all the search results for the term are people approving of war.”
And people had a weakness to the majority.
If “everyone” was saying something, it had to be true, right?
Everyone had been drawn in by some obvious numbers before, like the long line at a ramen shop or the top ranked item on a review site.
“Back up a moment,” said Kyousuke.
“Yes?”
“This was simply announced by America and named online…so the war hasn’t actually happened, right?”

He frowned even as he said it.
This was where the biggest distortion was found.
“The East Europe Axis has been named as an obvious ‘enemy of America’ in all this, but *no one actually knows what counties that label applies to.* Basically, any country or region that America attacks will have that label slapped onto them, making them an incarnation of evil. That’s completely backwards. Even the witch hunts followed a more sensible procedure than this.”
“Well, normal people only have the police’s word to go on that the terrorist the police shot was really a terrorist.”
The beautiful woman serving them breakfast was a high-ranking member of Illegal who sought freedom outside the protection of a large country or religion and were constantly the target of unwarranted criticism. She was likely familiar with that sort of treatment as a normal part of her reality.
And while he thought about this, Kyousuke’s shoulders rose slightly.
Below the table, a soft sensation had wrapped around his right shin. He looked up to see a smile on Lu Niang Lan’s lips.
Where no one could see, she had started teasing him with the bottom of her feet with only black stockings on them. How could she even do that with the two feet meant for bipedal walking? It felt like having a giant tongue licking up his leg.
“Hee hee. Kyousuke-chan, there’s no need to give me that look.”
“Lu-san… If you hadn’t made us breakfast, I might have hit you for being this rude.”
“Eh heh heh heh heh. I like being in control, so it pisses me off when you start feeling sorry for me. Get too gloomy and I have to reclaim my spot on top☆”
“Hm? What are you two talking about?”
Olivia tilted her head while focused on scooping up Chinese rice porridge with her spoon.
The modified China dress beauty maintained her smile while resting her elbows on the table, refused to explain, and simply returned to the original topic.
“The excuse seems to be that they want to prevent the East Europe Axis from destroying the valuable crystalline underground resources with soil improvements being made by dumping in all sorts of chemical fertilizers made from the shells of an older war. Although the photos released online are clearly fake, so I don’t believe it for a second.”
Lu Niang Lan said nothing about the secret battle below the table and toyed with her long black hair with a calm expression on her face.
“The focus this time is on a silicon mine newly discovered in a giant Eastern European mountain range. Silicon is the base material of Repliglass, but the rare silicon found there contains impurities as rare as colored diamonds, so they can be used for things very different from the normal variety. This is

not something that can be reproduced in the artificial minerals made in modern labs."
"Meaning?"
"There are new types of Repliglass that can only be made with that rare silicon. Think of it as a modern version of the old conflicts over rare earths."
Olivia had stopped moving ever since "a giant Eastern European mountain range" was mentioned.
Yes, her Kingdom F was located deep in the mountains of Eastern Europe.
The modified China dress beauty's teasing below the table also briefly stopped. Kyousuke slowly sighed.
"So they're fighting over the right to develop special new kinds of Repliglass?"
"Just to be clear, Kyousuke-chan, you opened the door to this." The modified China dress beauty waved a hand. "During the execution of the Queen, it was revealed that Houbi Village's Meinokawa Shrine has a lookalike of the White Queen, right? That is a fully artificial method of constantly summoning the Queen with no risk. In a way, that is the greatest hope of humanity according to groups like Azalea Magentarain's Guard of Honor. For better or for worse."
"…"
"And this is an unstable period when the White Queen's defeat has become widely known. *For those who wish to regain stability from the Queen's presence*, the internal pressure has grown to the breaking point. They would consider backing a war or two if it meant obtaining a perfect doll like that."
"And before that…oh, honestly. Repliglass itself was originally developed in a failed attempt to create a Queen lookalike."
"Oh, is that true? So to Quad Motors and the rest of the Americans, this might look like taking an incomplete product and completing it."
It was not actually known if they would be able to create another Meinokawa Aoi, the world's oldest Joruri Method, even if they did conquer those Eastern European mountains and combined those special crystals with Repliglass technology. Azalea was a skilled weapons designer and she was approaching that level by fusing old and new technology, but it was unknown if those in control of this incident could do the same.
Lu Niang Lan then seemed to remember something.
"Come to think of it, what happened to the real Meinokawa Aoi? And I don't mean the replacement you met in Houbi Village."
"Hm? You mean *Granny Aoi*? Isn't she hanging around Onii-chan's cruiser? She's looking after the place while we're out. She was jumping around on the Western bed since she isn't used to them and she was getting a tan on the deck while fishing in the ocean."
Olivia was exactly right.
Meinokawa Aoi was an artificial vessel and a perfect lookalike of the Queen. Kyousuke had predicted worshipers around the world would target her once

her existence came to light, so he had made sure that did not happen. The best way to protect yourself was not to surround yourself in thick walls; it was to disappear without a trace.
Thus, the people thrown into chaos by the Queen's execution could not touch Meinokawa Aoi.
That meant they would have to create a new one for themselves, but to reiterate, there was no guarantee they would succeed just because they tried.
However, some had taken action in the belief that they could do it.
That was the problem.
"You could do it better" were the words the devil whispered in the ears of kings throughout history. But when they lacked the skill to achieve that ideal, their actions would transform into oppression and slaughter.
"And that brings us back to why you've returned to Toy Dream 35, Kyousuke-chan. …This is what's going on with the Toy Dream Company."
Watching the two eat must have made her hungry because the modified China dress beauty's slender fingertips grabbed some pickled vegetables and placed them on her alluring tongue.
"There has always been a powerful link between Europe and America, so they are eager to protect their close friends from the Silver Resource War in Eastern Europe. No, they hold a lot of sway over Toy Dream's international revived cities, so perhaps it's better to say they want to protect their enclaves in Eastern Europe."
In Toy Dream 35, the regional finances had been left with a foreign company, so there was an extent to which Japanese law did not apply there. Critical groups called the cities financial and economic colonies or CIA relay bases.
"So no matter where in the world war breaks out, America can claim they were 'directly' involved and retaliate," said Kyousuke. "They don't even need the indirect excuse of protecting an ally."
"The military does not start the slow process of deploying troops only once the US Congress gives approval. They are already in every part of the world. The Toy Dream cities are scattered around the world like an oversaturated convenience store chain, so they can leave made-in-America 'products' anywhere they want. The instant they have approval, they can begin the attack. Scary, isn't…nwoh!?"
"?"
Olivia frowned at Lu Niang Lan's strange cry.
The modified China dress beauty bent over a bit and trembled.
"K-Kyousuke-chan. When intercepting someone's foot with your own, the polite thing to do is to remove your shoes."
"Kicking someone when they're trying to eat seems like the bigger problem to me."

Kyousuke nonchalantly replied after presumably lightly stepping on her stockinged foot when she tried to once more wrap her long legs around his below the table.
She really did look half in tears, but she managed to slip her foot out from under his sneaker.
“B-but unlike Europe, Asia does not approve of this war deep in the mountains. No one knows what the East Europe Axis is and nothing seems real when it’s happening halfway around the globe, so a lot of influential people are skeptical of the war. That is bad news for those who want to start the war after bringing the entire world onto their side.”
“…Lu-san.”
“People used to brag about being able to tie a cherry stem in a knot with their tongue, but I think this is more exciting.”
“Huh? I think I missed something… Onii-chan, did you two just change the subject all of a sudden???”
The situation under the table was difficult to explain.
Since Lu Niang Lan was in fact the Perfect Dragon, her toes inside her black stockings had begun moving the instant he had been slightly distracted and they had untied Kyousuke’s shoelaces. And then she removed his sneaker in a smooth motion.
“Kyousuke-chan, I assume you have a feel for that balance of power since you returned here to Japan.”
Yes. If this was all about Eastern Europe, Kyousuke and Olivia would not be here.
They had a different reason for being here.
Olivia must have burnt her tongue on the rice porridge because she reached for her drink, but that was warm oolong tea which only made things worse. He patted her head to comfort her and then cut to the heart of the issue.
“I hear Toy Dream has sent a ship to this city.”
“And there’s the left foot too. Yes, the Missing Princess. …That name would probably make you-know-who hide under a blanket if she heard it. Anyway, the design is based on the world’s 4th largest cruise ship that can circumnavigate the globe. I believe it could hold 5000 people. That makes it even larger than Azalea’s ship. But Toy Dream placed an entire VFX production studio and broadcast station inside it. There’s an old story of an entire village being built in the middle of the desert to film a movie, right? This is kind of like taking that movie village, packing it into the shape of a ship, and letting it travel freely across the seven seas.”
If it also contained enough entertainment facilities for 5000 people, it would be even larger than a high-rise resort hotel floating in the ocean on its side. Even nuclear aircraft carriers were quite cramped on the inside. If they were designed to be roomy, their size would balloon out endlessly.
“They had a few reasons for turning their big moneymaker into a mobile base. For example, the simple fear of being attacked and the ability to visit the location that inspired each new film to produce the VFX while viewing

live material. There are also rumors that they use it to send powerful broadcast signals into dictatorships where normal broadcast signals can't reach."
"Then I guess it must be strictly guarded."
"They've brought it to Toy Dream 35 to show off just how open it is, so simply getting on the ship wouldn't be difficult. Were they calling it a Cruise Fest? Anyway, they're giving tours of the inside for a summer break campaign. With the way that's going, I imagine this country's TV stations will follow suit and turn themselves into makeshift theme parks. Of course, the festival is only on the surface and you won't be able to get deep inside."
Lu Niang Lan fell silent for a moment there.
And then her alluring lips resumed moving.
"The Toy Dream Company is an important part of the world economy as a whole, so an escort fleet joins the Missing Princess as it travels to different UN countries. But it seems our industry has recently started to focus on that."
"You mean there might be summoners and vessels there?"
"Using our Illegal logic, sending troops to a rich residence would suggest connections to an underworld family or gang…but I'm not so sure when it comes to Toy Dream. I would normally doubt that ultra-powerful corporation has any links to the underworld, but *this is an unstable time*."
"…"
This was an age of chaos where the people who were supported by a powerful attraction (even if that attraction had been a negative thing) had scattered once more.
To put it another way, this may not have happened if not for what Shiroyama Kyousuke had done.
If the White Queen still reigned as the strongest, this may have been resolved without issue.
Kyousuke and Lu Niang Lan fell silent for a while. Only Olivia continued innocently eating.
"So someone wants to start a war badly enough to create a fictional category known as the East Europe Axis and they are pushing Toy Dream to action," said Kyousuke. "All so they can spread support of the war around the world and prevent anyone from speaking out against it."
"If the vote in the US Congress passes, the most powerful player in the 'surface' world will take action. Once the gears of war begin to turn, no one can stop them. What I don't know is how many *professionals* being manipulated by the White Queen or the Colorless Little Girl are involved or where they are involved."
"What do you know about Toy Dream's war promotion video?"
"It uses the same format of ultra-high-quality CG as their movie versions of children's books and cartoons. You know those foreign 3D children's movies that.…move in a squishy way like clay? They combined those with a few

actors and some live-action footage. The internal development codename was Blue Film."
"Blue…"
"Oh, Kyousuke-chan? You know what that term originally meant?"
Lu Niang Lan gave a bewitching laugh and placed her stockinged foot on top of his foot below the table. She then moved her toes as if tickling him.
Meanwhile, Olivia Highland was confused by it all.
…Blue Film might sound cool, but the term actually referred to a cheap movie that used obscene content as a selling point.
"Hey, Onii-chan, what does that mean?"
"Yes, that's a good question. But Kyousuke-chan knows everything, so I'm sure he'll give you a nice, thorough explanation."
"…Lu-san. Don't blame me for what happens if you don't stop this."
"Oh? Are you still holding back because of my stockings? Or was that a declaration of war saying you'll be tearing my stockings so you can see my bare legs?"
Kyousuke gave a troubled look and Lu Niang Lan smiled as a further secret battle was fought below the table.
Giving that name to a video meant to influence public opinion about a war hinted at just how Toy Dream viewed this agitation video. It clearly did not come from a desire for justice or patriotism.
"The official announcement for Blue Film says they plan to release a total of 4 episodes and the first episode was spread around the world using online video sites and satellite broadcasts yesterday," explained Lu Niang Lan. "It depicted a silicon vein blackened by the chemical fertilizer made from old and unusable shells."
"That has to be fake. And with all the VFX they're using, there's more than a 98% chance they just fabricated that along with everything else."
"To understand that, you need a fair amount of film literacy and an unwavering heart even when faced with the majority numbers. …At 10 minutes an episode, the whole thing will be less than an hour. That is all it takes to complete the installation and tear down human history." The modified China dress beauty traced her slender fingertip across her own lips. "The current public opinion is only 40% in favor of the war. But a major think tank's predictions say the 2nd episode will bring it to 50%, and the 3rd to 60%. And once they have artificially brought the level of data to the point of supersaturation, the final 4th episode will decisively tilt the world toward approval of the war. Oh, but the episodes are broadcast in Asia early, so the actual limit might be sooner than that."
"…I don't care what the self-styled intellectuals have to say. What do your Illegal instincts tell you?"
"I've traveled all over the west and the east as an arms dealer and it feels plausible to me. Of course, I'm sure America will win in the end no matter what happens, but you can still make money supplying weapons to the losing side. In this case, that would mean *a small country that will be*

declared a part of the East Europe Axis after the fact." Lu Niang Lan calmly ignored all the rules of the world. "You can make business deals as long as you make sure to avoid a currency that is about to crash. You need to negotiate for gold, diamonds, or anything else that will retain its value even after the country collapses. And if you keep the scales between the two sides as evenly weighted as possible, the war will drag on and your market remains. Of course, just like with a bubble economy, how much you get involved is something like a game of chicken. If you stick with them to the bitter end, you'll end up full of 5.5mm bullets stamped with that 'made in America' label."

It was easy for a pacifist to shout from the safety of their living room, but if a criminal group had begun making the financial calculations, the threat posed by the Blue Film was likely very real.

It was not that war would break out if someone screwed up.

War would break out if things were left as is.

"The war promotion videos are treated as top secret, so they are produced on the Missing Princess and then transmitted from the large antenna tower on the ship itself. That would be the world's largest online TV station: TD-ch, or the Toy Dream Channel. There are no third parties involved anywhere along the line, so it was apparently quite a shock for those in the old broadcast industry. The mass media is apparently trying to retaliate by finding some way to nab an internal leak, but you should assume there is essentially zero chance of any advance spoilers."

"Nweh? But, Lu Onee-chan, doesn't Toy Dream have a bunch of VFX studios besides the one on the ship?"

"I said the 1st episode has already been released, didn't I? 7th generation Toy Dream films put more effort into the background than the characters. Instead of just making them 'good enough', they do such a thorough job that you could walk around them and enjoy some skateboarding or tennis if you put on some VR goggles. That is only possible with System Atlantis, the Missing Princess's mainframe."

"Atlantis? Oh, the one that sank into the ocean?"

"It's meant to say they could construct an entire lost continent for a single film if they wanted to. Well, supercomputer names are always way too self-conscience. Hyahhh!?"

"Lu Onee-chan!?"

Olivia sat up from her seat when she heard that fairly serious scream, but the modified China dress beauty held out a hand to stop her while bent over and doing her best to resist something.

Kyousuke gave a triumphant snort.

During their secret battle below the table, Lu Niang Lan had gotten carried away and tried used her stockinged toes to remove Kyousuke's socks, but she had banged her little toe against the table leg for a self-inflicted KO. Of course, the boy had lured her into doing it.

Even if she was the Perfect Dragon, she was still human, so the stun effect of a dresser corner worked on her. She pressed her large breasts against the top of the table, pointed the top of her head his way in something like a bow, and irregularly twitched as she did her best to get her voice out.
“…K-Kyoushuke…-chwan…”
“I said not to blame me. Now pull yourself together.”
At any rate, none of this would end unless they did something about the Missing Princess.
Videos would be regularly released like the ringing of a cuckoo clock and the 10-minute episodes of the Blue Film would gradually guide public opinion to work up the entire world population. Once things had been heated up to the point that no one could stop the war, the US Congress would be free to hold their vote and begin the war. Shells and missiles would take flight just because people wanted a lookalike of the White Queen, wanted her by their side, and wanted to protect this unstable age.
Kyousuke had thought he would bring peace to the world if he defeated the White Queen, but the flames of war were only spreading.
His stomach was not full, but he breathed a heavy sigh.
He asked Lu Niang Lan a question now that she had recovered from the pain in her little toe and finally got up from the table.
“What is the estimated death count if the war does start?”
“Oh? I thought you were the expert at working out those things, Kyousuke-chan.”
This time, he blatantly clicked his tongue.
That summoner worked it out in his head without relying on a supercomputer.
“About 2.5 million within 48 hours of the war beginning. After 98 hours, it would reach 10 million when indirect damage is included. Kingdom F and the four counties around it would be swept up in the flames of war one after another.”
“Digital wars are scary things, aren’t they? That is far more people than human beings could kill on their own.”
Some helpless fools were about to begin an orgy of violence activated by the flip of a switch.
Lu Niang Lan winked and made a suggestion.
“What do you need?”
“Everything I might need to infiltrate and sabotage a ship with the assumption that there is a summoner organization onboard.”

Part 2

The blazing sun shined on the Missing Princess, a nearly 450m cruise ship with floats attached to long arms on either side. When viewed from above, the arms would look like three long and narrow sticks lined up in parallel. The extra buoyancy would increase the water resistance and reduce fuel efficiency and it required a unique design for the gangway to disembark, but they stabilized the ship's balance. Even if a submerged torpedo or an anti-ship missile skimming just above the surface blew a giant hole in the hull, the floats would prevent the ship from sinking.

The ship had five levels for a total height of more than 30 meters.

The higher the center of gravity, the worse the ship's balance and the greater the risk of capsizing or sinking. That would be why they had floats on either side to increase stability, but that would normally not be an option since a ship's diesel engine cost more than 7 million yen a day to run. At this size, it probably could not use the Panama Canal, so it would have to take a large detour when circumnavigating the globe. But there was a trick to that. First of all, this was not a normal ship.

"That thing has a nuclear engine. And while I'm sure they need all the power they can get to support a cutting-edge VFX studio that will spend 30 billion yen on a single film, they're pretty brazenly breaking the Three Non-Nuclear Principles here."

It was frightening, but history had proven that – West or East – nuclear weapon states did not view nuclear power as a threat. Even though that was not something that should be left up to an individual country's sensibilities.

The foreign Toy Dream Company had bought the entire regional administration for the international revived city, so the normal laws did not apply. At times like this, they almost seemed to be gloating.

…The Missing Princess itself was famous, so simple diagrams could be found in plenty of pamphlets and guidebooks. Lu Niang Lan had dug a bit deeper and found the CAD data used to design it, but that only got them so far. The "authorized personnel only" zones were blanked out, so they would have to investigate those for themselves.

Everyone knew of it, but no one knew anything about the deeper areas. The Missing Princess's mystique was similar to that of important facilities like the White House.

Kyousuke performed a final check of their equipment and spoke to his little partner.

“C’mon, Olivia. Let’s get started.”
“Okay.”
After crouching down on the wharf and giving a glass pellet to a small sea anemone while pushing on the bottom of Kyousuke’s Repliglass Blood-Sign, the double blonde braid girl turned around. The Blood-Sign had apparently won the fight over the “bait”. Olivia immediately jumped toward Kyousuke and he retrieved the long stick from her. Phosphorous quickly coiled around and took the shape of a waitress’s tray.
Olivia was not dressed in her usual school swimsuit dress. She was wearing a skintight diving suit that showed off every curve of her juvenile bodylines.
“I’m a ninja, I’m a ninja. You’ve gotta be dressed like this for a stealth operation.”
“Yes, yes.”
“Okay, let’s destroy that weird video base and protect everyone in Kingdom F.”
Kyousuke was similarly dressed in all black and he sat on a vehicle that resembled a bike floating in the ocean. However, the entire thing was covered by a protective cover with a streamlined design that resembled a fighter jet’s canopy. Once Olivia had climbed in to sit in front of him, which meant in his arms, he pulled down the clear cover.
“This is a smuggling model that was designed for stealth, so it doesn’t have an air conditioner. Take frequent drinks from the water bottle I gave you to keep yourself hydrated.”
“I have cooling sheets on my armpits and inner thighs, so I’ll be fine. Uuh, in fact, I might be too cold…”
This might seem silly, but they would be exposed to the August sun in what amounted to a plastic greenhouse with no ventilation or cooling. And if they passed out in there, no one would come to rescue them.
Kyousuke felt bad keeping Olivia involved since the Queen execution incident, but he appreciated her skill at controlling Materials. In a different way than with Biondetta, he could work well with a partner who was familiar with how it all worked.
But the more someone carried with them, the greater the odds of losing them during the intense fighting.
He knew he had to cut his ties with her eventually.
“Hm? What is it, Onii-chan?”
“Nothing.”
Kyousuke and Olivia made their way out into the ocean in the kind of small submersible that was primarily used by Illegal to hand off valuable but illicit goods in the dark depths of the ocean. Even at the depth of a meter, being under the water meant a lot. The sun sparkling on the surface completely negated any security that relied on eyesight. It felt like the temperature had rapidly dropped, just like entering the shade of a tree.
And after traveling about 2 kilometers…
“Huh? Onii-chan, you’re turning off the engine?”

“Shh. When we pass by the escort ships, the flow of the tides is our friend.”
This kind of small submersible was used by the best of Illegal. Talk of stealth tended to focus on the EM used by radar, but diverting and absorbing the soundwaves of active sonar could also prevent detection. But the same could not be said for passive sonar that simply gathered noises from the ocean. Avoiding any and all noise when sneaking in was the most basic of ideas that even a kindergartner would understand.
Luckily, the Missing Princess itself was a giant mass of noise thanks to its large form and the floats on the sides. Plus, the Cruise Fest was underway. The party event had loud music playing on the deck, a host was speaking into a microphone, and fireworks were going off. Once Kyousuke and Olivia made their way far enough inside the Missing Princess’s defenses, they had already won. The escort ships would have sampled the acoustic signature made by the Missing Princess’s propellers, but the other noises were too loud for that to be any use. They could restart the submersible’s engine and have it drowned out by the other noises.
They were also aided by the Missing Princess’s structure.
If they surfaced in the gap between the hull and one of the floats on the side, they could leave the submersible there without worrying about the escort ships spotting it.
The clear protective cover popped up and the August air actually felt cool. The hastily-prepared smuggling submersible was like a sauna inside.
Kyousuke tied the submersible to the side of the float using a synthetic rope. Olivia asked a question while having trouble as the submersible rocked unsteadily.
“How do we get up on top? I’ve heard Japanese ninjas like toads. Do we attach suckers to our hands and feet and climb up the side???”
“I think you have the wrong idea about ninjas, westerner. Let’s do something simpler: humans can do just about anything with a rope.”
“Oh, I know about that! Japanese bondage is an art, isn’t it!?”
“…We’re busy now, but we need to have a talk later, Olivia.”
After tossing the rope straight up and tangling it around the ship’s railing, he climbed up while carrying the small girl on his back. It looked simple enough, but climbing a vertical rope was a dangerous technique that could kill even a professional soldier. There were plenty of simple but deadly mistakes that were not featured in movies. And you should not even think about climbing a curved slope that was steeper than vertical with no powered assistance unless you had participated in a special training program for mountain soldiers or an assault team.
On his back, Olivia placed her slender chin on his right shoulder, rubbed her cheek against his, and made an innocent comment.
“You’re like a spider… Is there not a Repliglass that can do this?”
“I’m sure there is, but we can’t carry around a bunch of tools that *can only do one thing*.”

While carrying all their equipment and an entire person (albeit a child), Kyousuke took only 15 seconds to climb more than 10 meters. He had combat-level climbing skills rather than sports-level. His speed was impressive, but it was also necessary. With the burden it placed on your arms and legs, you only wanted to climb for a short period of time. Even on a wall, you would search out small footholds and indentations where you could rest in between climbs. Even if the wall was large and vast, it could be heard to search out a route that moved from one rest point to another. Meanwhile, the smooth ship's hull had no footholds and sloped outward toward them. There was no hope of taking a rest there. If he could not finish the climb and cross the railing in less than a minute, he would have had to abandon the idea.

They climbed up onto the side deck on the far starboard side.

A straight passageway continued on and on like a school hallway. Kyousuke untangled the rope from the railing and retrieved it and then he lowered the waterproof zipper on his black diving suit.

He removed that to reveal his usual hoodie and track pants.

He was not all that sweaty for spending time in the plastic greenhouse of the submersible. That would be thanks to the cooling sheets placed on his major blood vessels at his armpit, neck, and elsewhere, but not sweating when you should was actually a sign of danger. He could not trust this too much.

He peeled off the cooling sheets from below his clothes.

"Olivia, put the diving suit in this bag. The cooling sheets too."

"Okay."

Olivia also began unzipping her skintight diving suit to reveal the short dress made from a school swimsuit and a floral pareo, but…

"Watata…hm? It's caught on something?"

"It's your swimsuit's shoulder strap."

The double blonde braid girl just about opened her swimsuit up from the neck in a tunnel shape that revealed everything below, so Kyousuke quickly stopped her.

Olivia did not seem to understand the danger, so she peeled the cooling sheets off of her soft inner thighs while he supported her.

"Onii-chan, where are we headed first?"

"Just remember the plan."

That was all Kyousuke said as he reached for the round knob of one of the waterproof doors lining the wall like in a school hallway. He opened the steel door which had the gaps filled with a rubber seal and the two of them slipped inside.

It was a striking change of scenery.

They were reminded that the ship doubled as a VFX studio and a broadcast station.

It looked like a shiny Wall Street office seen in a foreign drama. There was a short gray carpet and white plastic walls. The rectangular panels lining the ceiling may have been LED lights.
Wearing little more than a swimsuit, Olivia pressed her legs together and held herself in her arms.
“Ohh, this can’t be good for my health… O-Onii-chan, it’s like a fridge in here…!”
“We need to eat a stamina-building meal today. Eat somen here and the summer heat would get to you.”
The overly-air-conditioned corridor was lined with numbered doors that had IC card readers for electronic locks. They looked like they led to corporate conference rooms, but this was where a normal cruise ship would have passenger cabins.
However, this was also a mass media facility.
“This door says Sean Bourdon and this one says Marilyn Javer! Th-those are movie stars…”
“These must be dressing rooms. They were originally just meant as a place to rest, but they’ve been expanded into something like a luxury hotel room.”
Kyousuke gave that blunt answer while they climbed the stairs. The ship was floating in the ocean, but the dressing rooms alone filled three floors up from the deck. There was enough space for more than 1300 actors. There was also an exit to a heliport on the roof for the popular actors that could not stay for long.
“Wow, wow…”
“Don’t forget that stopping the ridiculous war comes first. Besides, Olivia, you’re a princess, so you don’t need to feel nervous.”
“Hm? Hmm? I don’t follow, Onii-chan. Ah, someone’s coming!”
They passed by a large man in a navy blue guard uniform, but there was nothing suspicious about them now that they were onboard. That was why they had changed out of their diving suits which looked like full-body tights. Olivia cautiously hid behind Kyousuke’s back, but kids must have found the man intimidating all the time because he actually smiled gently and waved at her.
(Is he a normal Toy Dream employee? One problem here is that we can’t tell the normal people apart from the Illegal soldiers. I’ll have to make some guesses from how they carry themselves and any eye signals they make.)
They climbed another stairway to reach the third floor. The area had been full of blanks in the map they bought from Lu Niang Lan, but the number of columns, layout of lights, vents for the air conditioning and ducts, location of drains and faucets, communication cables, etc. all provided hints. They only had to work out the structure of the ship like restoring a corpse’s living appearance by adding clay to the skull.
“I guess this works,” said Kyousuke
“Works for what?”
They stopped in front of one dark gray door among many.

Of course, they would not have needed the submersible if they had made a reservation, but Kyousuke pulled a multi-tool from his hoodie's pocket and easily opened the door's electronic lock.
"Hm? How did you do that with normal tools, Onii-chan?"
"Just hurry inside."
Kyousuke opened the door, urged Olivia in, and then slipped inside the cabin himself.
As soon as the small double blonde braid girl saw the large queen-sized bed, she dived onto it.
"Ohh. It's bouncy. I'm bouncing. This bed is even better than the one in your room! Too bad Granny Aoi missed out on this."
"You can't really compare my cruiser with a luxury cruise ship. …But anyway."
"Huh? Why are the bathroom's walls made of glass?"
…Similarly, the entire cabin made no attempt to hide its purpose: the large bed had two pillows, the bathroom was fully visible from outside, the wallpaper and carpet were pink, the lighting was indirect, and there were an awful lot of tissue boxes available.
This was commonly known as a leisure room.
Kyousuke did not want to think too much about how it was used.
"Lu-san said some large equipment had been brought in for the video production, so I was guessing they would have reduced the number of people onboard to avoid being overburdened. But it seems this is why there are so many empty rooms…"
Yes, the diagram they had was incomplete!
"Ehh? But this room looks kind of fun. Ah ha ha! Look, look, all the walls around the bath are mirrors! And there are so many shampoo bottles!!"
"Olivia, I seriously doubt those are shampoo or conditioner, so don't pump any of it into your hand."
"Nweh? What are these rubber egg things? They're soft…but I don't think you could scrub your body with them. Wait…there's a hole on the bottom?"
"Olivia, put that down."
Exasperated, Kyousuke used the previous multi-tool to stick a knife blade into the wallpaper seam. He slid the knife straight down that line and removed a portion of the wall like it was a large panel.
He selected the necessary cable from the bundle running vertically through the wall and connected it to the mobile device in his bag.
"Good, good. I've got the signal. …As I expected, it's coming from below."
After turning all the knobs and pressing all the panel buttons in the unnecessarily glass-covered bathroom, Olivia grabbed several of the mystery eggs and juggled them as she stuck her head out.
"Hey, Onii-chan, isn't that the main cable connecting the online broadcast equipment to the broadcast tower on the roof? If you cut that, won't it stop them from *releasing the videos needed to start the war*?"

“I could, but they would just find another way to release them. I want to get into the studio where they’re producing the 2nd and 3rd episodes and destroy the System Atlantis computer being used to make the Blue Film videos. So Olivia.”
“Yes, yes. I have to change again, right?”
Olivia left the bathroom, dived onto the large bed, bounced, and rolled over toward him. There were a few large waterproof bags inside the main bag and Kyousuke pulled out one that contained clothing.
Once a summoner or vessel earned enough Awards, normal people would forget about them the instant they were out of sight.
But when moving through a limited space like this, there was always a risk of running across the same person and having their memories return. There would also be Illegal summoners and vessels here. When a purse-snatcher or mugger was fleeing through the streets, they would often turn a reversible jacket inside-out just after turning a corner to give themselves a different look and lose the police.
“Wait a second, Olivia. Why are you starting to change right here?”
“But, Onii-chan, it doesn’t matter where I do it in this room. The bathroom is surrounded by glass.”
“…”
“A-and if it’s you, I don’t mind if you watch…wahp!? Wait, what was that for, Onii-chan!?”
Olivia had a thin bedsheet thrown over her head like a Halloween ghost and Kyousuke quickly changed while she was struggling with it.
(The jumpsuit? No, not yet. The tuxedo would probably be best.)
He never wore anything like this in everyday life, but a tuxedo was a more informal version of dress clothing. It was only a replacement for a proper tailcoat. A bowtie tuxedo was actually even simpler than a school uniform’s blazer. By the time Olivia finally managed to get her head out from below Bedsheet Mountain, Kyousuke was already calmly putting on the black jacket.
“Ah! …I missed the best part. Onii-chan, are you a magical girl…?”
“If you have time for that nonsense, get to work. Here, keep that sheet around you like a *teru teru bouzu* and you can change without anyone seeing. Just like before swimming class.”
“Uuh. Why do I have to look so dumb while I change?”
Olivia puffed out her cheeks while looking like she was about to get her hair cut and she began rustling around below the sheet. The decorative collar and floral pareo fell to her feet one after another. The sheet was thin enough that her silhouette showed through in a rather risqué fashion.
Then the slender girl lifted up one foot to remove the swimsuit.
“(…Oh? I just had the best idea. If I pretend to trip and roll on out, I bet it would surprise Onii-chan. And I cling to him…)”
“Olivia.”

Sensing an ominous atmosphere, Kyousuke gave a warning, so Olivia pouted her small lips and let the dark blue swimsuit fall to her feet.
The double blonde braid girl pulled a light champagne-colored dress inside the sheet and rustled around inside some more.
“There, and…oh, really? I can’t get the zipper on the back…”
“Olivia, your body isn’t quite soft enough to be having trouble there.”
“This is none of your business.”
“Honestly, what do you normally do with a bra?”
“I said it’s none of your business!! Onii-chan, can you zip this up? The one on the back.”
She pulled the sheet up. She had already put on the light champagne-colored dress, but the back was not zipped up and it had nothing to support it. She used both hands to hold it to her flat chest and turned her white back toward him. The shape of her backbone and her shoulder blades were visible and her milky-white skin was tinged with pink.
“Uuh, hurry.”
“Is that any way to ask for a favor? I guess you really are a princess deep down.”
The zipper was as delicate as the silver chain of a necklace and Olivia’s back shuddered as she endured the ticklish sensation of it zipping up. She even squeezed her eyes shut and let out an odd voice.
“Nn…kh.”
“Olivia?”
“It’s nothing. (Your fingertip stroked up my spine, Onii-chan.) Cough, cough. Anyway, just get it over with.”
He finished zipping it up.
After making sure it was fastened, blushing Olivia fully removed the sheet. The skirt spread out below her knees using a pannier that worked much like an umbrella frame and she hopped up and down, perhaps to check on the fit of the chest which was decorated with fancy buttons.
“Good, good. I can jump around without it slipping or falling off. I’m ready to go!”
“Olivia, you changed from a swimsuit into a dress, but I didn’t see you grab any underwear. Make sure to put some panties on along with the gloves and stockings.”
“Tch. There goes my ‘trip over nothing’ plan…”
She reluctantly pulled some underwear out of the bag and put it on.
“It’s a shame we have to leave this room so soon. Oh, what’s this? It says ‘take one’. I should bring a souvenir back for Granny Aoi.”
She was like an old lady taking back the complimentary toothbrush or soap.
Kyousuke repacked the bare minimum of equipment in a small briefcase and left the large bag in the room. Having changed into dress clothes, Kyousuke and Olivia boldly reentered the ship corridor.
Because she was used to seeing them as a royal, Olivia did not even glance over at the maid pushing a cart full of cleaning supplies.

“Onii-chan, where are we going and how are we going to get there?”
“The signal itself was coming from below. The System Atlantis mainframe is probably in a windowless space at the very bottom of the ship below the waterline, but I just know we would run into a security gate if we took a direct route there. I don’t want to cause any trouble just yet, so let’s take a detour.”
“What kind of detour?”
“Let’s head up for now. The commercial area is full of restaurants and a mall, but they also make late night food for the staff. If we use the small elevator shaft for the food carts, we can reach the bottommost level without passing through the security gates.”
The commercial area was above the three stories of actor dressing rooms. After climbing more stairs, they found something like a fashionable shopping mall. Both sides of the long corridor were lined with jewelry stores, boutiques, and luxury restaurants, the area overhead was opened up into an atrium, and more small stores could be seen on the higher level. The signs suggested there was also a casino and gym. A clown in heavy makeup and a bunny girl were performing card tricks in the middle of the corridor to gather passersby’s attention.
“Oh, it’s Gozaru!”
Olivia gave an excited cry when she saw people dressed up as the Gozaru Samurai and a sheep surfer who was apparently popular in the southern hemisphere. This was a Toy Dream ship after all.
Including the dressing rooms, the entire structure was 5 stories above the deck. A normal designer would want to scream at the poor balance of the ship, but that was why it needed the floats attached to arms on either side.
Glittering light shined down from above the atrium.
It did not come from fluorescent or LED lights. It was sunlight after passing through a thick layer of water. Basically, there was a 200m pool on the roof and the bottom was made of reinforced glass.
Olivia gaped up at the strange visual of seeing young men and women swimming overhead in swimsuits.
“Wow… So this is the life of a Toy Dream star on the forefront of the global film industry. When you have that much money, you end up looking kind of silly.”
“Make sure you grow up to be a wonderful administrator with thrifty hobbies, Olivia. Kingdom F will thank you. …Hold on. Is that who I think it is?”
“What is it, Onii-chan?”
“No, it’s fine. Even if it is them, it shouldn’t cause any harm…I don’t think. But are they here for a job or for fun? Regardless, why have those useless twins changed into swimsuits?”
“Hm? Because it’s summer?”
They probably had no idea what they looked like here. Shiroyama Kyousuke stared grimly up at the black- and blonde-haired girls doing the

breaststroke. They wore what was known as a halter-neck bikini which had the cloth wrap around the neck instead of using straps and they wore a pareo around the waist. The swimsuits were white and the pareos red, but was that to give them shrine maiden colors? Because the swimsuits were not very revealing, waitresses at a seaside restaurant might wear the same thing. That made it easy to forget these were swimsuits, so he felt like he was peeking up miniskirts of normal outfits.
Then Olivia lightly kicked his right shin.
“C’mon, Onii-chan. We have a job to do.”
“That’s…right. We were having a serious discussion here. So what came over me?”
However, this was not the time to get into an argument over the nature of the world.
“Let’s get down to business.”
“We’re using the food cart elevator shaft to reach the bottom level, right?”
“If every restaurant kitchen had a direct path, the ship would be full of holes, so it looks like they gather all the carts in one place and share the same elevator.”
“That’s for late night food, right? So it shouldn’t be in use while the sun is in the sky.”
“Normal room service runs all day long, so we need to make sure we aren’t crushed while moving through the shaft.”
“Oh, but this is such a wasted opportunity. I’m finally alone with you, so if only we could take our time window shopping.”
“Olivia, stay by my side.”
And just as they were saying that, Kyousuke sensed movement and breathing. A large group holding cellphones and mirrorless single lens cameras pushed in from an escalator to their side.
They were led by a tour guide who wore a tight skirt and waved a little flag. She used a megaphone that looked like a cross between a trumpet and a handgun to herd them around.
“Okay, we will now be taking a break while having a buffet-style get-together. You can join the party at any time, but you only have 10 minutes if you want to catch the greeting from Toy Dream President Michelange Toydream, so…”
They were quickly swallowed up by the crowd. Fighting against the current to reach the industrial elevator would only make them stand out.
They just barely failed to make it.
If Kyousuke had not needed to grab Olivia who was wandering around daydreaming, he could have escaped to the wall without being caught.
“Ah…ah ha ha. I guess we’ll just have to go with them. …Are you mad, Onii-chan?”
“…”

Kyousuke shut his eyes and breathed a heavy sigh before silently raising his index fingers on either side of his head. He was apparently upset enough to have horns growing from his head.
The tour group took the two of them to the very back of the ship.
There was a large space there. It had to be around 30m square. It was also made into an atrium to give it two floors' worth of height. The walls and ceiling were unnaturally white. It looked extremely sterile, but not because it was a party hall. This was the cutting-edge of Toy Dream's film VFX.
Since the entire space was filled with a single color, it had to be the studio used to film the actors before everything else was added in.
The party hall was crammed full of people and Kyousuke frowned at the sensation below his feet.
It creaked.
(I see…)
"Ah, it's an all-you-can-eat!!"
Olivia cried out excitedly and it was cute how she seemed to think it was called "all you can eat" instead of a buffet. A variety of foods was lined up along the wall and everyone was free to take what they wanted. Since Olivia wore the dress perfectly even at her age, Kyousuke had thought she would be used to fancy parties like this, but it may have been a rare experience when you were a kingdom's princess. She would not be allowed to casually choose whatever food she wanted and pile it onto a plate herself without having a poison tester or anything like that.
Food was piled up in front of her like something from the Manchu Han Imperial Feast. That may have attracted a childish part of her because she forgot all about why they were here. She started panting with an imaginary puppy tail wagging full speed behind her.
"I want to do that! I want to do the all-you-can-eat! We've gotta do it to blend into the background, Onii-chan!"
"We can just follow the flow of people around the party hall and then leave."
"Ehh? You don't understand the maiden heart, Onii-chan."
"I'm not a teenage girl, but I know this has nothing to do with being a maiden…"
To Kyousuke, this ship was a target of infiltration and a crime scene. Even if he seemed unbeatable, he wanted to avoid leaving any kind of trace behind, even teeth marks or some saliva.
However.
"Oh, my. Is that Kyousuke and Via over there?"
They heard a female voice as sweet as honey cooked down until it was burned to the bottom of the pot. It was not that loud, but it pierced through the chatter oddly well. It was a gentle but forceful voice.
And double braided Olivia's face lit up when she heard it.
In a normal home or town, this would not be very remarkable, but given her position, she could not just ignore this.
"Huh? It's my mom."

It was Kingdom F’s Queen Sinceria Highland.
Government Award 913, Noble Bride.
The unexpected appearance of this high-level vessel caused Kyousuke to press his fists against the sides of his head. With the index fingers sticking out a bit, of course.
A seemingly insignificant pebble was causing everything to derail.
He could not deny the sense that they were drifting further and further away from his plans.

Part 3

The woman oozed attraction.
How attractive was she? There was a legendary story of the *secret international meeting* held by Government, Illegal, and Freedom in New York's UN headquarters having to pause so a VIP from another country could have their secretary tell her to restrain her attraction before it hindered the proceedings.
To the ignorant people, she was the mysterious queen who smiled beyond a mystical veil.
To those in the know, she was an unbelievably beautiful head of state.
She had to have countless servants, but her waist-length wavy blonde hair had not been carefully woven or blow-dried, but that was probably a part of *restraining her attraction while on official business*. Although having nothing to adorn her may have actually caused her natural glow to shine through even more.
Was it supposed to look like snow or ice?
Or maybe glass or crystal?
Assisted by the shine of her hair and skin which seemed to emit their own light, she wore a long dress colored a refreshing blue reminiscent of mint ice cream. It left her shoulders bare, but it was not very revealing overall. Nevertheless, the proportions pushing the dress out from within seemed like the ultimate form of human beauty. She wore the crown of Kingdom F's monarch, but it did not look remotely out of place. It was made of glass and an alloy that mixed iron with a few impurities. That design was apparently meant to represent the principle on which the kingdom was built: the glory of the royals must not place any pressure on the livelihoods of their subjects.
The glass jewels that represented the kingdom's six regions were supported by the alloy that represented the kingdom's strength.
In the end, it was not wearing platinum or giant diamonds that made someone shine. In fact, it was the people who were afraid what people would think who felt the need to artificially increase their value with gold and jewels. A truly beautiful woman would feel no such concern. That was why they could choose whatever they wanted without feeling any restrictions. And when someone who possessed that confidence and attraction wore it, even plastic could shine like the sun. The people who

went the sour grapes route and tried to forcibly find a flaw would end up disgraced, so it was said her beauty was enough to silence even the critics.
If aliens were writing an encyclopedia entry on earthlings, they might use a photo of her. But that would technically be in error. Kingdom F's Queen Sinceria Highland's beauty had already partially left the realm of humanity.
Going through her facial features, skin, curvy proportions, etc. would leave you with too much to list, but her most unique feature was her ears.
They were thin and long like bamboo leaves and they extended outwards.
"Oh, my, my, my. I didn't see you here earlier, so where did you come from? If you had told me you were here, we could have spent more time together."
She was a character from a fairy tale.
Her dress was like something from a picture book, yet it looked right at home on her.
"Boo. You say that, but you're always so busy, mom."
"I had a good reason to leave you with a wet nurse, but that is an issue for another time. Getting together as a family really is best."
That ruler of a kingdom pressed her hands together in front of her large breasts, a shining locket was hanging from her neck and half buried in her cleavage, her ears twitched, and she smiled gently at them. Looking at her now showed a strange aura that seemed to combine an adult allure with a childish innocence. That may have been why everyone let their guard down around her and were dragged down into that bottomless pit.
Kyousuke *was accustomed to inhuman beauty*, so he used that to stay in control of himself.
"The party still has another 30 minutes and everyone is waiting for the final greeting from President Toydream, but let's enjoy this while we can."
"Eh? It's already ending? But I haven't eaten anything yet!"
"Hee hee hee. To make sure you don't gain any excess fat, avoid the fatty beef and pork or anything with too many carbs. Other than that, your mother won't stop you. You finally got started on that figure skating program, so we have to let the Aurora Fairy do its job."
When Shiroyama Kyousuke heard that, he silently stared at tiny Olivia.
That girl, who was lithe by any international standard, silently averted her gaze.
"Oliiiviaaa."
"D-do you need something, Onii-chan…?"
"You had trouble zipping up your dress and said it tickled, didn't you? Olivia Highlaaaaaand???"
As the suspect dodged the persistent old police detective's questioning, Sinceria placed a hand over her mouth and laughed.
When a vessel ended their contract, they would lose their memories like a normal person. They would return to a normal life until they came in contact with a summoner or vessel once more.
Sinceria had once left her daughter with a wet nurse and avoided seeing her in order to keep Olivia out of any trouble related to the Summoning

Ceremony until absolutely necessary, but the White Queen worshipers of Bridesmaid had messed that up. Now she had no need to hide her love for her daughter.
At least there was one positive side to killing the Queen in Houbi Village. That was how he had to view this.
“Anyway, Via, this is the Cruise Fest tour, so the events are divided up into short time blocks so no one stays in one place for too long. In exchange, they have a breakfast, lunch, dinner, and even teatime scheduled. This is a bit of a late breakfast, so let’s hope lunchtime works out better for us.”
The Highland family had produced female vessels for generations. Whenever a powerful summoner was found within their knights, they would bind a contract with them to ensure the maximum performance in defending the kingdom, even if that meant wasting a chance at reaching Award 1000. A lot was unknown about what changes and side effects occurred when a vessel bound new contracts over and over, but Queen Sinceria was the greatest example of that. (Perhaps even more so than Isabelle who had been forced to repeatedly bind contracts according to certain rules to artificially break her soul.) She had bound so many contracts that the structure of her body was gradually changing and she was obtaining an inhuman beauty.
Kyousuke breathed a heavy sigh and shaped his hand like a bowl to grab Olivia’s small head as she tried to rush toward the mountain of food.
“…What brings you to this event, Your Majesty?”
“There is no need to be so formal. If you marry Via, you will be a royal just like us, so feel free to treat me like your own mother. Hee hee hee. Yes, think of me as a beautiful, kind, and somewhat defenseless mother-in-law♪”
Kyousuke sighed again. He had been pivotal in ending Kingdom F’s civil war, so she may have wanted to bring him into their bloodline so they could call it a victory for the royal family, but like a true ruler, she was acting like it was already a done deal. She gave no thought to his circumstances…or rather, she saw it as the greatest possible promotion in life, so she saw no reason for him to decline. It was the same unbeatable joker played by Cinderella or Snow White to live happily ever after.
No.
Kyousuke’s self-analysis told him he may have simply not known how to handle the strange tolerance of a somewhat careless adult woman.
…Because it reminded him of someone who had vanished at the Queen’s Miniature Garden.
Sinceria placed a slender hand on Kyousuke’s chest and leaned toward him while making sure not to get in the way of her daughter who was clinging to his side.
“(Yes, and if waiting until Via has grown is too much for you, her mother can play that role in the meantime. Yes, as a mother-in-law who is generally perfect but just can’t leave some things alone♪)”
“Your Majesty.”

“Hee hee hee. You can always use me as a sign of what Via’s future holds and be honest with your desires. The world of royalty is still rife with complex family trees and concubine systems in this day and age, so you can leave the standards of commoners behind. …Oh, no. This looks like trouble.”
As Olivia stared blankly, Sinceria stepped away from him like a pendulum swinging back. A moment later, the crowd parted and a new person stepped up. She looked a little older than Kyousuke, so about college aged. The beautiful woman had red hair that fell to her shoulder blades, thin-framed glasses, an athletically-fit build, and an intellectual atmosphere. …However, she wore a white blouse and longish wine red tight skirt with old-fashioned silver armor in places, so it all looked like a strange suite of armor.
The knight with a J-shaped metal staff at her hip had to be trained in etiquette since she was attending this diplomatic function, but she pointed straight at Kyousuke’s nose with an index finger covered in jointed metal.
“You *again*, foolish mercenary!? You may be the hero who ended our civil war, but stop milking that one good deed for all it is worth! Know some shame and your place, you fool!!”
“Now, now, Rachel. Keep this up, and this will turn into a new type of badger game. Even if normal people forget all about us, *we* are the representative of Kingdom F and we must keep up appearances.”
“…My queen, did you just confess that you were flirting with this nobody so blatantly that people would suspect it was a type of financial scam?”
Sinceria cleared her throat and faced the other way. Mother and daughter were much alike here.
Rachel Wormwood was the current summoner contracted with Sinceria. That meant she was Government Award 913 and held the position of the strongest of Kingdom F’s knights. Wormwood was an old poisonous plant that’s name could be found in the book of Revelation. As that name suggested, it was possible her family had not begun as knights. She may have come from a line of witches who had assisted the ancient knights who founded Kingdom F. That would explain how they had entered the world of the Summoning Ceremony.
Meanwhile, Sinceria was not going to remain quiet after what happened. While still facing the other way, she placed her index finger on her slender chin and her long ears twitched more than necessary.
“Hmm. But it seems Kyousuke has a contract with Via now, so I wish the two of you could be more friendly. You know, as the two summoners who protect members of the same royal family.”
“And I am saying that very contract is a sign of his insolence!! There is a second and third ranked member of our knights and they all swallowed their tears when giving up the opportunity for a contract. So how can this outsider waltz in and gain a royal contract with no effort whatsoever!? Hmph!!”

“But merit is everything for the knights, isn’t it? Rachel, you make it sound like you alone are safe, but if you don’t put in more of an effort than Kyousuke, I will choose him for my contract instead.”
“Kh.”
Rachel’s slender shoulders jumped like a scolded child’s. Every single Kingdom F knight knew the severity and cruelty of that decision. Even the knight who had married the queen and had a child with her had been kicked out when he lost the position of the strongest. That was not to say there had been no love there. The locket at Sinceria’s chest contained a photo of that three-person family and she adored her daughter Olivia. But to protect their kingdom, she had to demand top performance from the person standing by her side. The final defense for their people had to be the very best, not just the second or third best. The queen was not so weak that she would allow her personal feelings to influence that system.
Many knights had torn apart that royal family and created a deep rift between them.
And Rachel was the latest part of that.
Whatever she thought in her heart of hearts, Sinceria had smiled and accepted this female knight. So she would surely accept the next knight just as readily. No matter what emotions roiled in her chest.
However.
Kyousuke hung his head even more than Rachel and a dark shadow fell over his face.
“(Please stop doing that. I don’t like being used as a threat to motivate someone.)”
“(Hee hee hee. Rachel is cute and skilled, but I know from experience that they will grow rusty if they lack an obvious rival. Please help me keep Kingdom F’s strongest sword sharp.)”
…In other words, she did not dislike Rachel.
After straightforwardly training to build up her strength, Rachel had no need to feel bad about what had happened to her queen’s husband. The wife had followed the system and the husband had failed to maintain his position as the strongest. It would be insensitive for anyone else to interfere in an attempt to change that outcome.
In fact, Sinceria liked Rachel enough to drag her around on official and personal trips across the globe. That was why Sinceria wanted to protect this contract in any way she could. But without bending the strict rules. Rachel had taken the top spot among the knights, but Sinceria did not want her to stop there.
Kyousuke sighed.
“Now, Your Majesty, we have gotten off topic, but would you be willing to tell me why you are-…?”
“Not so fast, mercenary. How dare you speak like that to my queen? Have you forgotten how very, very, very, very, very, very bitter we knights are that you keep going over our heads?”

Rachel spoke in a low voice and finally drew the staff from her hip.
The end extended like a special police baton.
The nearly 2m silver rod was a Blood-Sign for the Summoning Ceremony. The J-shaped end suggested it was based on a battle hook that was used to grab at an armored enemy knight's neck or shoulders to knock them down or drag them off their horse. Choosing definite results over valueless decoration told Kyousuke this was the weapon of someone who had to protect their queen and did not see failure as an option. That was a perfect match for Rachel herself, so he quite liked the weapon choice.
But Sinceria sighed and gave a comment of her own.
"Oh, how disappointing."
"Gh!? M-my queen, what was that sigh for?"
"What a disappointing knight. It could have been a sword or a spear, but you go for a battle hook? Weren't those popular as a light weapon for revolting peasants who could not master the complex form of a halberd? Doesn't that mean a rebellious ideology has influenced Kingdom F's final shield into wielding a friend of the spade and the hoe? …It just seems so unrefined."
"N-no. This has grown into a truly practical weapon!!"
"Uheh. You sound like one of those historians who have forgotten all about the romance and excitedly argue that a spiked metal ball on the end of a stick is more effective than a sword or spear against someone in full armor. It's just so…sigh. Well, if that's your preference, I won't stop you. Tch. I've also heard that the White Queen was killed, so maybe the world really is ending…"
"D-dammit, this is all your fault, foolish mercenary!!"
Rachel panicked and completely ignored cause-and-effect in her accusation. Her long J-shaped metal rod must not have been as obvious a weapon as a blade or gun because the normal people in the party hall only gave them curious looks. They may have thought it was a specialized tool used to open a manhole cover or to remove the simple awning over a café entrance.
And another trial awaited her.
"Hmm. If you don't like Onii-chan going over your head, Rachel, then surely *you'll* explain everything. So give a simple and thorough explanation! For Onii-chan!!"
"Nghhh!?"
Olivia smiled and used her two extra sentences to drive further knives into Rachel's side, so the woman doubled over. Something must have broken when she did so because the battle hook visibly shrunk. The disappointing knight was trembling as she tried to bear with it, but then Sinceria gave a wicked smile and intentionally continued the attack. No, it may have been the merciful finishing blow to a servant writhing in pain on the battlefield. It was psychological euthanasia.
"My, my. That would save me a lot of effort♪ Rachel, you really are an excellent and faithful servant. So will you please do that? You will be

speaking in our place, so make sure you avoid any filthy language that would damage the reputation of Kingdom F's queen."
"…Sinceria…my queen…"
"A mistake here would be an insult to the kingdom as a whole. That would require a greater punishment than when I tease you in bed, so keep that in mind."
The mother seemed to have casually mentioned something shocking, but Kyousuke decided to take that secret with him to the grave. Quite a few of Japan's Warring States commanders had participated in homosexual acts, but there was a theory that had less to do with preference and more to do with avoiding the risk of inheritance issues if mistakes were made in a casual relationship with the opposite sex. So could this queen be doing something similar…?
Rachel suppressed tears behind her intellectual glasses, bent her mouth into a lopsided frown, and glared at Kyousuke with all her might while her athletically-fit body trembled.
"…This is a request from my queen. It breaks my heart to do so, foolish-…"
"Raaaachel?"
"Allow me to provide a sincere and whole-hearted explanation!! Ask me whatever you like!!"
She straightened up and saluted.
Kyousuke felt somber, but…
"Then let me ask again. I would like to know what Kingdom F royalty is doing on this ship. Since you are also a summoner and a vessel…could it have to do with *that* side of things?"
The Toy Dream Company was doing some unnatural things and trying to spread videos that created an argument for war. The development codename was Blue Film.
Lu Niang Lan of Illegal had suggested this was a result of the chaos following the White Queen's death and that professional summoners might appear along with the ship's normal security.
"Is that extremely contradictory statement meant to test me? I see you are as insolent as ever. If it would not place a shadow on my queen's countenance, I would purge you on the spot. In fact, it is a failure on my part that I cannot."
She simply could not hide her true character. Rachel was already irritated and tapping her armored fingers against the battle hook she had returned to her hip.
"Hmph. Count yourself lucky as you listen, mongrel. If you are that ignorant, I will remind you. In addition to creating original children's stories, Toy Dream has accumulated their massive fortune by making films out of their new interpretations of existing picture books and old stories. The royal palaces and silver mountains they have depicted were based on our picturesque Kingdom F. I am willing to praise their eye for aesthetics, but that is a problem in this case."

“Oh, I get it…”
“The Blue Film they are creating to push for war is a laughable bluff about a mineral vein being blackened by chemical fertilizer created from old shells, but they have used elements of Kingdom F in its creation. *It depicts a kingdom torn apart by civil war*. Thinking of the heroes who lost their lives in that conflict is enough reason to feel resentful of that, but the Silver Resource War they are supporting will take place in Eastern Europe and they have set the stage for the flames to first fall on our Kingdom F. We will be placed in the nonsensical category of the East Europe Axis.” Rachel spat out the words. “Once war breaks out, we will take direct damage and also have an influx of refugees from the surrounding countries. Not only are they taking advantage of our old wounds, but they are also seeking further bloodshed. That is a clear insult to our kingdom. It is unclear how much Toy Dream is being manipulated here, but it is only natural for the queen who protects all our people to be concerned.”
Of course, the monarch could not immediately take action just because she was worried.
They carried the weight of an entire kingdom on their backs.
Kyousuke looked like he had figured it out.
“So has your kingdom’s intelligence agency already taken action? They have already gathered what intelligence they can and you are using your diplomatic privileges to fill in the leftover blanks? …You can slip right past normal guards since they’ll forget all about you and you can question anyone you want with the full authority of a head of state.”
“Wait. I must make a correction, mercenary. Our righteous and orderly Kingdom F has a proper order of knights, not a pack of filthy rats. What you refer to is not a public agency with a history and traditions born of a monarchy; it is more like a civilian think tank created by modern capitalism. Hmph. Learn something, you ignorant and pathetic nobody. It irritates me to no end that you would make such a careless misunderstanding in my queen’s presence.”
…Whatever the system, what they had to do was the same, but every country had their unique issues, like how Japan could not refer to their patrol boats and escort ships as “warships”. It would be crass to press the issue.
The modern knight placed a hand on her hip.
“We plan to meet directly with President Toydream and determine his true intentions, but since you are here, I can only assume you have your own foolish plan. Hmph. If you intend to sneak around like the mercenary you are, then I will share one piece of information with you.”
The knight breathed from her shapely nose and diligently did her duty despite how irritated she was. She pulled a notepad from behind her breastplate and showed him a photograph contained within.
“As a knight, I cannot publicly recognize my connection with you, so I cannot actually give this to you. Memorize the face here and now.”

“…That won’t be necessary.”
“Hmph. I should have known a mercenary would know some unsavory people.”
Rachel gave a snort of laughter and flicked her armored finger at the center of the photo.
“Illegal Award 999, War Criminal. This summoner stands at the top of one of the three major powers. And rumor has it that he is far in the lead *when only looking at the number of people he has personally killed.* He is the ultimate criminal. He has reached a level where an individual’s actions can be seen as a war.”
“…”
“I see. Looking at it that way, this summoner is the exact opposite of you, the king of not killing.”
He silently denied that.
No matter what nice excuses he might make, Shiroyama Kyousuke was probably history’s greatest killer *when looking at the number of people he had indirectly killed.* He had not forgotten everything that began with the Queen’s Miniature Garden.
Whether she realized that or not, Rachel stole a glance at his face.
“His profile says he *adores the White Queen’s destructive power* rather than her beauty or charisma, but who knows if that is true. Hmph. You have a bizarre history for a nobody, so I am guessing that look on your face means you have met him before.”
“…You could say that.”
That short answer held great meaning.
Kyousuke had supposedly taken out that summoner in a surprise attack five different times. But each time, the summoner had fallen from a dam, been swallowed up in a blazing abandoned factory, or otherwise *caused even more damage than Kyousuke had expected* and gone missing. Kyousuke had always lost track of him, so he had failed to force him to retire by taking an eye or an arm that were even more precious to a summoner than their life.
And he had since been confirmed to have resumed his criminal activities all over the world. Kyousuke knew Lu Niang Lan had to be aware of it, but his view of the underworld was very different from that modified China dress beauty, so he could predict that she may have been silently accepting the other summoner’s actions.
Would he perform another vanishing act?
Or had the Queen’s death shaken him enough to fight to the very end?
Death always failed to fix War Criminal and Kyousuke would not change either.
“When he gets going, he’ll kill enemy and ally alike, so he cannot work as a group with Illegal as a whole. Mercenary, hmph, that is good news for you.”
That was what it meant for him to fight a war as an individual.
The top of Illegal did not wage war with a large army at his command. He himself was the phenomenon of war and he would bare his fangs against all

forms of life within his reach. Once he got started, he would not discriminate between his own army and the enemy army. In a way, he was even more troublesome than Elvast Toydream, the former king of Government. There was still a possibility of War Criminal himself making an appearance, but since nothing he said could get Illegal as a whole to put in an effort, he could not really be taken at his word.

…This new generation of leaders left a bitter taste in Kyousuke's mouth. The leaders of the three major powers he had seen at the Queen's Miniature Garden had been very different from the current ones.

Illegal Award 999, War Criminal.

That ruler of evil was always protected by as many bodyguards as a national president, but everyone knew they were essentially a suicide squad. He went through allies faster than anyone else. When that berserker awoke, it was every man for himself.

Illegal as a whole saw him as a thorn in their side and may have even hoped Kyousuke's attempts against their leader would succeed. That would explain why there had been no major attempts to retaliate.

Rachel sounded exasperated, either toward Kyousuke or that moral failure.

"Well, because he is so well known, this could be a false report, but there have been scattered sightings of him. We do not know just how deeply this War Criminal is involved in all this. Hmph. But be careful if you face him here. It does not matter one whit to me if you two opposites clash, but do not forget that Princess Olivia, the future ruler of our kingdom, stands by your side. If you allow her to shed a single drop of blood, I will remove your head. Listen, I, Rachel Wormwood, will follow through on that threat, so keep that in mind. Prioritize the princess's safety over your own silly principles. I am telling you to *ensure her safety by killing when you have the chance to kill*. Surely even a fool like you can understand that, right?"

Kyousuke did not nod or shake his head. He instead lost himself in thought. He muttered under his breath to work through the information he had.

"…I see. If he is a gore lover who was attracted to the Queen's violence above all, then he would find it difficult to accept her death or defeat. It's like having an unbeatable monster that chases people around with an axe, but then it's killed by a hail of gunfire. His options are to find a way to prove the White Queen's superiority or to side with the Colorless Little Girl who killed her. It would make sense for War Criminal to have been shaken by this turning point."

"That's enough of that."

With a gentle smile on her face, Sinceria clapped her hands together in front of her large chest.

The silver locket buried in her cleavage shined brightly.

"We have shared most of our information now, haven't we? Kyousuke, I assume you know since you infiltrated the ship instead of blowing it up from outside, but there are a lot of unrelated tourists and crewmembers onboard. Keep that in mind when arriving at a solution to the problem."

“…What kind of person do you think I am, Your Majesty?”
“Oh? I actually find it unusual for the Kyousuke I know to hold back against the enemy. During our civil war, you used the Summoning Ceremony to take out a guard unit’s laser railway gun and then used that to shoot down the Repliglass aerial aircraft carriers flying above the capital. And while ensuring they could all make an emergency landing, of course.”
“They may have fallen into enemy hands, but all of that was Kingdom F equipment! You were overlooked due to my queen’s kindness, but when counting the aircraft inside, each of those aerial aircraft carriers should have earned you a bill of 300 billion. And I am not talking about your yen here. I am talking about the euros trusted the world over! Oh, this foolish boy. Hmph. Whatever your principles might be, you take things too far!!”
Kyousuke could not stop coughing even though he did not have allergies. That was a different issue from the one here, so Kyousuke had to do his best to change the subject.
“Anyway, Your Majesty. Kingdom F’s official name is the Flanguild Permanently Neutral Kingdom, is it not? You seem to, um, have an awfully large stockpile of weapons for a name like that.”
“Do not be silly. My queen has no need to defend herself here. Permanent neutrality does not mean that we will suicidally put up no resistance. It means we will not instigate an attack ourselves. If another country makes a military strike on our noble Kingdom F, we have not just the knights but also a universal conscription system for the rest of our citizens. Career soldiers who are always whining about money and people who refuse to fight to defend their country are not patriots.”
“Um, uh, it is nothing as strict as that,” said Sinceria. “As their queen, we have attempted to refuse, but they insist on protecting the kingdom and the royal family, so the universal conscription system is not actually written into law… And the Repliglass weaponry is not a product of our kingdom. Even after the eastern powers were broken apart by the Warsaw Pact as a NATO vanguard, America still wanted a deterrent against those eastern powers that wished to gain influence over the Western economies, so they pressured us to buy those weapons. No, it would be more accurate to say we are renting them. Possessing too many weapons causes the surrounding countries to view us as a threat, so it can be a pain to deal with. Honestly… And when Quad Motors sensed the approaching war, they stopped all maintenance and returned to their home country early, so none of them are functioning properly. They are entirely useless to us.”
“This always happens… This is why you can’t trust outsiders!! They are all such cowardly nobodies. Hmph. And that of course includes you, foolish mercenary!!”
“If we really are ‘nobodies’, should you really be getting so worked up over us?”
“Wait…you…why must you always catch me off guard and make a fool of me in front of my queen? Kiii

Doing everything perfectly was not always a good thing. Kyousuke had apparently changed the subject too far.
The sexy blonde woman separated her hands in front of her large chest and held out her palms to soothe the overly-serious glasses knight.
“Calm down, Rachel. You did well, so stand back for now. Even if you are both summoners who protect the royal family, if you keep showing off how well you get along, you might trigger an explosion of royal jealousy.”
“Wha-…my queen! Please avoid making such careless statements in public. No one can read your mind, so such jokes will lead to misunderstandings!!”
“I was not talking about myself. Via is pouting her lips and looking more and more displeased.”
“Ugh, and her purity just makes this more of a pain to deal with…!! You are mistaken, princess!! I was merely fulfilling the task given to me by the head of state!! Not for a second have I felt any kind of affinity with this filthy mercenary!!!!!”
Rachel probably could not afford to make any more casual insults.
Olivia’s cheeks were puffing out like rice cakes.
“If you say so, Miss Friendly. But I don’t care. I’m taking Onii-chan to some dark place where you and mom can’t see us. And then I’ll make sure to gain an insurmountable lead. I can get as close to Onii-chan as I want there.”
“Oh, going with them sounds like a lot more fun. I’ll let Via handle all the pure parts of the relationship, but as her mother, I will make up for the parts she can’t do yet.”
The knight directed killer intent Kyousuke’s way before he could get a word in edgewise.
She was snapping her teeth together so hard he thought sparks would fly from her canines.
“…Foolish mercenary. I hope you are not going to take that seriously.”
“Can someone please rescue me from whatever is going on here?”
“Hmph. Fine, then. You might stand by her side, but do not forget that we live in a very different world from you. Honestly. This ship is enemy territory, so I cannot just ask you to end your contract with the princess, but why does it have to be this nobody of a mercenary of all people?”
“Sit. Stay. Onii-chan, Rachel is just showing off how friendly she is, so can we get going?”
“Your words hurt me, princess…!!”
The knight clenched her fists and worked to endure the humiliation, but Olivia seemed entirely oblivious as she linked arms with Kyousuke as if to show off.

And then something fell from the decorative buttons on her flat chest.
It was light and the floor was carpeted, so it did not make a noise. …It could be easy to forget given the circumstances, but they had snuck aboard and Kyousuke did not want to leave anything behind. Without thinking, he reached down to pick up the dropped item, but then he froze.
It was one of those rubber products that used their thinness as a selling point.
The entire atmosphere froze.
He seriously considered trying to hide it under his foot, but when he looked up, he found that both Sinceria and Rachel had seen it. There was no time to recover from this.
“Oh, my.”
“What in the-…!? Foolish mercenary, is that…cough, cough!!!!”
Rachel started choking so badly Kyousuke began rubbing her back, but she simply glared at him.
“Foolish mercenary, allow me to ask again. Did you do this while aware what that item is for!?”
“Oh, my, my. Hee hee hee. Rachel, you take things too seriously… But I would like to hear this too. Yes, yes. I would like to hear Kyousuke himself explain it to us: what is that?”
“(No, wait. This is your time to shine, Kyousuke brain. Does the correct answer mean survival? Think carefully. What will a quick yes or no answer bring other than a pool of blood? I should base the odds of survival on that. So should I play dumb instead? Or I should I just remain silent…?)”
“Oh, my, my, my. So that’s what you’re going with? Hee hee. It seems Kyousuke the Expert is playing dumb so he can hear Rachel explain since she has already implied she knows the answer. He seems to want to see her blush and fidget while she explains the proper use of that item.”
“Foolish mercenary!!!!!!”
“You damn queen! You’re using your knight as a shield to throw oil on the fire from a position of safety, aren’t you!?”
Meanwhile, Olivia did not seem to understand the gravity of the situation. She innocently picked up the dropped item.
“Oh, this is the toy from the leisure room Onii-chan took me to.”
That sounded like an excuse, but it was no excuse at all.
Every last word of it was the worst possible.
She likely did not understand how the terms “leisure room” and “toy” sounded when used together like that.
“Oh, my. Then it seems her mother won’t need to help out after all. That’s too bad, though. Even if this is probably better in the long run.”
Sinceria placed a hand over her mouth and smiled. She had to understand it had been a part of their infiltration mission, but she still poured plenty more oil on the fire.
And she did it all while feigning compassion.
“An ex post facto punishment might be unfair…”

And amid the multi-layer misunderstanding, the knight who protected Kingdom F gave one deep nod and made her announcement.
“But I believe I said I would remove your head if you allowed her to shed a single drop of blood.”

Part 4

The relationship between summoner and vessel came in all forms, but for Government Award 913, Noble Bride, the summoner held the Blood-Sign and the vessel held the Incense Grenade. That avoided any situation where a Material was summoned without warning, causing a panic.
When the knight grabbed her long weapon and began swinging it around, Sinceria nonchalantly tripped her and nodded to Kyousuke who took Olivia and left the somewhat panicked party hall. Since the head of state stuck her tongue out and waved, Kyousuke felt some sympathy for the knight who had tripped quite spectacularly in public. He decided it might be best to send her a gift.
Yes.
She could be a real pain in the ass, but that knight had done nothing wrong. There was something wrong when the world made a fool of someone so diligent. He had to make up for that.
In his dress clothes, Kyousuke grabbed a small briefcase from the cloakroom and returned to his search of the ship with Olivia in her dress.
“…This one could be tricky. Rye and corn cereal can have too strong a flavor for beginners. But rice is too plain, so it might not feel like she’s really eating anything. Granola, acai, chia seed, quinoa… Those wouldn’t work either. You need to be familiar with the fundamental spirit of cereal before you can appreciate those. Yes, it would be best to go back to the basics for a gift.”
“Onii-chan, what are you muttering about?”
“If I take six small packages and arrange them in a paulownia box to look like a luxury item… Eh heh heh. I hope Rachel likes it.”
Once they got started, it went quickly.
Kyousuke and Olivia returned to the commercial area full of restaurants and shops and they made their way to the small industrial elevator for the food carts.
“We’re finally back on track…”
“Onii-chan, you sound like you just aged a whole bunch.”
“And whose fault might that be?”
Much like a turntable parking garage for a multi-tenant building, they opened a vertically sliding door and climbed down the long shaft with a ladder. This allowed them to sneak into Toy Dream’s giant VFX studio on the bottom level without passing through the security gates.

“Honestly, if only we could have done this from the beginning.”
“Yeah, who would have thought we would run into my mom here? Maybe she gives off some kind of force that draws people to her.”
Kyousuke could not argue with the idea that powerful people and rulers had a unique attraction. It was not an issue of logic. It would always remain a mystery to the sociology professors who envied that inborn talent and desperately worked to analyze how it worked. It did exist. Because the White Queen had the power to distort both worlds and she waited far, far beyond those other people.
After creeping out from the elevator, they found yet another new atmosphere. It was dim because the lights were intentionally kept low. But why? This was a VFX studio where workers were constantly staring at screens, so would outside light reflect off the LCD monitors and would differences in brightness cause their eyes to adjust unnecessarily when they moved between the room and the hallway? Was it meant to avoid any discrepancies in how different staff members saw the colors?
Swordsmiths used heating and cooling in a battle against heat to refine the quality of the steel, so the slight disturbance in room temperature from opening and closing a door could ruin an entire sword. In cutting-edge VFX production, color and light may have reached that same level.
That said, not every artist and illustrator that specialized in coloring would necessarily be that picky.
But Toy Dream would invest 30 billion in a single movie, so they would apparently go that far when it came to choosing a single shade of color.
Ordering room service instead of heading up themselves would be a way to limit the number of times they reset their senses outside this specialized environment. The strict security gates may have mostly been a way to keep out any unnecessary light.
Kyousuke carefully observed the dim corridor before returning to the food cart room and opening his briefcase’s latch.
“Olivia, it’s time to change. It looks like our personal clothing would blend in better than a work jumpsuit. Let’s return to normal.”
“Yes, yes. But won’t someone my age stand out no matter what I’m wearing?”
“I saw a girl of about 8 walking around with a cooling sheet on her forehead, so education and age aren’t what matter here. Still, it’s scary to think that was one of the top runners supporting films that cost 30 billion each…”
There was no partition here, so Kyousuke decided to change back to back, but once he removed his jacket, he realized Olivia was staring right at him.
Amaterasu Kyousuke opted to retreat into the elevator shaft.
With the sun gone, Olivia spoke from beyond the metal door.
“Onii-chaaaan, I’ve learned my lesson, so come on out.”
“I haven’t heard any clothing rustling. I know you’re waiting for me in the nude, so just get changed already.”

“Tch.”
After a while, she called out to him again.
“Onii-chaaaan, I’m all done.”
Kyousuke opened the cave entrance to find Olivia in her school swimsuit, decorative collar, floral pareo, and straw hat. She was adjusting the swimsuit where it was riding up on her small butt. She would betray him in obvious ways, but she was an obedient child who would quickly change when called out.
“Hand your other clothes here. I’ll put them in the briefcase.”
“Okay.”
A small piece of cloth was suddenly dropped into his hand.
At about the size of a small steamed bun, it was a balled-up pair of panties.
“Olivia…”
“You’re the one that insisted I wear them back in the leisure room. This was your request, so you take care of it. Hee hee hee. They’re still warm, aren’t they?”
She had the look of a mischievous little devil.
He wanted to punch himself 30 seconds ago for thinking she was obedient. This may have been a sign that she had Sinceria’s blood in her veins. All expression vanished from his face as he shoved the dress, panties, and shoes in the briefcase.
The silence must have been overwhelming because Olivia pressed her legs together and fidgeted.
“Huh? It didn’t work?”
“It’s time you learned that not everyone will be swayed by someone’s charm. Even if you follow Sinceria’s example.”
He got back to work with that woman’s daughter.
They were inside the “authorized personnel only” area located past security, so they could not rely on the map they had bought ahead of time. This entire area was blank on the map, so they had to do the investigation work themselves.
Unlike the higher levels, the corridors took labyrinthine paths here, so the layout must have prioritized the location of equipment over convenience of movement. The walls were generally made of glass, so they could see into the offices. A single staff member would be staring at several monitors spread out in a fan shape, using a pen-shaped device while also using keyboard shortcuts, or putting on VR goggles and turning their head every which way. Kyousuke recalled that the backgrounds made using System Atlantis were high enough quality for someone to walk around inside them. If Kyousuke and Olivia could see them, then they could see the two of them. Since no one sounded the alarm, either their casual clothes were working or the workers had lost all interest in the real world after working so many days in a row.
Olivia pointlessly clung to Kyousuke’s back to sneak around for no real reason.

“They’re eating something weird. It looks like birdseed… Is that some kind of celebrity food?”
“Tch. …They went for something more fancy without learning anything about standard cereal first?”
“I thought everyone who worked with videos would eat blueberries. To keep their eyes healthy.”
“Is it even true that they heal your eyesight?”
At the very least, they had never been popular among summoners who placed a lot of focus on their physical eyesight.
Then the double blonde braid girl seemed to shift her focus from the glass-encased booths to the corridor they were walking down.
“What are those? They don’t look like statues.”
“Industrial clay. I think these are clay models made using 3D machine tools. They make a physical test model to make sure the product of their data doesn’t have any mistakes. I’ve also heard that they make these when developing cars or Repliglass.”
Kyousuke answered while they passed by a clay aerial aircraft carrier sitting on a rectangular pedestal in the center of the corridor.
…This kind of equipment had gotten a lot cheaper with the spread of 3D printers that used plastic, but when the quality had to be on the level of a car development model, a single mass of clay would cost several million yen. This was apparently another part of the production where they spared no expense.
The crank-shaped passageway took several right angle turns. Kyousuke and Olivia were after the original data for the war promotion videos, so those areas that stuck out unnaturally were exactly what they wanted to find.
They passed by the occasional genius who staggered down the hallway like a zombie, but Kyousuke eventually used his multi-tool’s knife to swiftly pry open a lock.
They found a room lined with what looked like refrigerator-sized tombstones.
The room was as mercilessly chilly as a supermarket’s vegetable section and Olivia more or less only wore a swimsuit, so she held her shoulders and shivered.
White breaths left her mouth as she spoke to Kyousuke’s back while he connected a cable to his mobile device and one of the machines.
“O-O-Onii-chan… Did you find what you wanted?”
“No, it looks like it isn’t here. But wait…could this mean…?”
He pulled the cable out and checked a few more rooms while Olivia trembled. One room had a large metal sphere with thick cords attached from every direction, one had a latticework shaped like a fancy cookie that had tons of small processors inside, and another had a box submerged in a chilled pool surrounded by reinforced glass. No two devices were the same, but Kyousuke’s expression remained clouded.

“O-ohhh. The fluctuating temperature is affecting my crotch… A-are you done yet, Onii-chan?”
“This is odd.”
Kyousuke’s comment made it clear this was going to take longer than expected.
And he gave no thought to Olivia’s personal crisis as she fidgeted beside him.
“Looking at the machine specs, there’s no way this has the processing power to support a 30 billion yen film. These have to be no more than terminals and relay points. It’s more like an online cloud service. Is System Atlantis not actually on the ship?”
“How much longer is this going to take? If I was in a large pool, I would probably secretly let my spine tremble and enjoy the feeling of release…”
“But what other location are they communicating with? If they have a direct hotline to eliminate the risk of the signal being intercepted…oh, so that’s it.”
Kyousuke reconsidered the situation, came up with a new theory, and got to work.
Meanwhile, Olivia waved a hand in the corner of his vision, gave up on him, and snuck out of the machine storeroom.
And after a while…
“Yes, that is what’s happening… Oh? Olivia, where did you get off to?”
“Sigh. So there’s one of those in the disaster relief bag. I might need to take drastic measures soon.”
They both had extremely serious expressions.
“This means the ship only carries the production staff and the screens needed to remotely control everything. System Atlantis itself is somewhere else. There are more computers here than a domestic company could ever hope to afford, but they’re all used to relay the signal from somewhere else.”
“Huh? But then why make the studio into a ship? Wasn’t that to keep the studio moving so the supercomputer isn’t fixed to one place? I don’t know if it’s in the jungle or the desert, but what’s the point of the ship when someone can just attack the main supercomputer?”
“Yes, that’s why they have a hotline set up, but the mainframe is still *with the ship*.”
“…?”
Olivia looked puzzled and Kyousuke pointed straight down.
And he spoke.
“It’s in a submarine. They exchange data with it using a geomagnetic field coil that can maintain high interference even in the water.”
Olivia blinked silently for a while.
“Geomagnetic…field?”
“The concept itself isn’t so rare. Anti-sub buoys can apparently detect one hiding down to about 1000 meters below the surface. They drop a giant coil

into the ocean and use the disturbance in the earth's own magnetic field to locate the submarine. As long as neither side emits any dangerous EM or sound waves, that can be modified to detect tiny magnetic disturbances just by typing on a keyboard wired up within the ship. It's kind of like a modern form of telepathy."
She did not react much to his explanation.
She may have been unable to keep up with something on so large a scale.
"I imagine they would have just put everything on the sub if it would have fit. Compared to a ship floating on the surface, a submarine below the surface has to be made more compact. …Well, technically they could build an extraordinarily large submarine, but once the sound of it parting the seawater passes a certain point, it might as well be announcing its location."
That was why they had hidden the valuable System Atlantis in the ocean and then built a separate ship for the staff workplace and living space.
…If they ran into trouble, they could sacrifice the staff on the surface and sneak the mainframe away to safety.
Kyousuke took a slow breath.
"It's lucky we used a small submersible to get onboard… Olivia, we have no more business on the ship. Let's find a way to get to the nuclear sub below here. That's where we'll find the original data we want."
Just then, a deep noise rang out and all the lights turned red. This alarm overruled the dimmed lighting meant to protect he staff members' eyes.
Their infiltration may have been discovered…but Kyousuke could not think of any reason why.
Which meant…
"Olivia, what did you do while I wasn't looking?"
"I-I-I-I-I didn't do anything yet!! There was a portable toilet in the disaster relief bag, but I didn't know how to open the package. I got distracted trying to open it and then I found I didn't need it as badly anymore. See, I can jump and hop around just fine. So I didn't do anything!!!!!"
Kyousuke did not know why she was arguing so insistently it made her red in the face, but someone must have noticed something out of place in the break room. Sensitive people would notice a single chair out of place at a long table or a slight movement of the salt shaker or sugar jar.
There were rules unique to infiltrating an indoor location, much like worrying about footprints or broken branches in the jungle. Simply put, leave no sign of your presence in enemy territory. That mostly meant not to touch anything unless you had to, but he must have failed to drive that point home with her.
He clicked his tongue, unhooked the cable, and lightly cracked his neck. It was time. If System Atlantis was not here, they had no further business on the ship.
Olivia had grown quite tearful and she asked a question in a barely audible voice.

“…What should we do, Onii-chan?”
“At this point, there are no safe and clever plans to rely on.”
Kyousuke let out a short breath and reached for his back.
He pulled out his Repliglass Blood-Sign called Phosphorous and lightly patted Olivia’s small head over her straw hat to comfort her.
“We break our way through and run away.”

Part 5

As soon as they opened the door, they ran into a security guard in a navy blue uniform who ran around a corner in the corridor.
He may have thought no one would see as long as there was no window nearby because he held a handgun customized for full-auto.
(Tch! So are we finally seeing the Illegal soldiers who are using the ship's uniforms!?)
But Kyousuke did not face him head on.
He adjusted the angle of the waterproof steel door just before the merciless rapid-fire attack began. A clay model worth millions of yen shattered atop its rectangular pedestal, but Kyousuke was not focused on the horizontal downpour of bullets. A door built to withstand powerful water pressure was enough to block those.
What mattered was the ridiculously loud gunshots.
That was the natural result of firing in a closed space. The guard was knocked out by the wall of noise he himself had created.
"Let's go, Olivia."
"How did you do that? Ricocheting?"
He had not done anything so dangerous. Summoners needed decent spatial senses to handle the White Thorns and Petals with their Blood-Sign. If he adjusted the locations and angles of objects with a focus on how and where the soundwaves would be reflected, he could focus the noise on a single point like gathering sunlight with a concave mirror. That transformed it into a powerful nonlethal weapon.
Whenever they ran across an enemy, he would open a nearby door, knock down the ceiling panels with his Blood-Sign, and otherwise interfere with the reflecting soundwaves.
Each time, the brawny guards would collapse to the floor with amusing ease. He would approach the enemy while their limbs trembled like a dying insect and he would kick their handgun far away before hurrying on.
When the pursuing enemy was using projectile weapons, they could not use the elevator shaft again. They would have nowhere to escape if the enemy fired down at them while they were climbing up the ladder in that narrow shaft. That meant they had to leave straight through a security gate. They really did have break through.
And the enemy seemed to have figured out his trick.

When he saw a guard wearing something like headphones over his ears and attaching a silencer thicker than the gun barrel itself, Kyousuke grabbed Olivia under his arm.
“Hyah!”
“Quiet.”
He ducked around a random corner to avoid the muffled gunfire, opened a nearby switchboard, and messed with a fuse. A high-voltage current leaked out, he heard a loud sparking sound around the corner, and the storm of gunfire ceased. This was a production studio using the massive power produced by a nuclear engine. The excess power alone was plenty destructive.
Even after seeing the fate of the guard who had taken the lead, the enemy would only hesitate for a few seconds.
This was not a permanent solution.
Still holding Olivia, Kyousuke kicked open a nearby door. The sign had called it a “multi-purpose conference room”, but it was really an entertainment room. A movie theater screen surrounded you with over-the-top audio and video while you pedaled an exercise bike to produce plenty of adrenaline and dopamine.
Kyousuke combated the gunfire by turning off the lights to give them the cover of darkness. Olivia did not sound all that nervous in his arm as she made a suggestion.
“Why not summon a Material and wipe them all out?”
“It is true those are Illegal, but they’re *still* just normal soldiers. They aren’t even Repliglass soldiers protected by thick armor. Doing that would kill them.”
Kyousuke answered her while using a different exit to run back out into the corridor.
In addition to that, this was a windowless space located below the water level. The biggest threat would be if the enemy lowered some thick emergency shutters to cut off all escape and then flooded the area with seawater. The assistance of a Material and the protective circle only lasted 10 minutes, so they had no real defense against that tactic. He wanted to escape above the water level before the enemy came up with that idea like they had figured out how to use headphones and silencers to deal with his soundwave counterattack, so he wanted to avoid anything that would keep them in one place.
When restricting himself to nonlethal methods, the enemy always held the initiative. While making sporadic counterattacks to reduce the number of guards, Kyousuke and Olivia were driven from place to place.
(I see. So this is where we’re headed.)
Kyousuke noticed something and actually let the enemy lure him in a certain direction.

He tackled open a thick soundproof door and found a large space with 30m sides. It was hard to tell with the red lighting, but the floor and wallpaper were pure white.
“The filming studio…”
They had reached the very back of the ship, so they were directly below that party hall.
The enemy was already waiting for them.
One was a sexy woman with short hair, a black leather jacket that left her navel exposed, and a tight skirt. Her outfit screamed “prison guard” so much it seemed somehow fake. The other was a little girl with wavy hair dyed purple. She wore a comical white and black striped prisoner outfit and had a ball and chain attached to her ankle. A criminal scent hung over them both, but that may have been because they were an Illegal duo.
The female prison guard puffed on a ridiculously-thick cigar and spun a tonfa in her hand. It extended into a Blood-Sign more than 150cm long.
Kyousuke knew of a high Award-earner that matched this description.
Illegal Award 887, Eisen Rosen.
Despite their flashy appearance, they must have been faithful to their job. After all, they had agreed to work as guards under Illegal Award 999’s direct command even though he would attack enemy and ally alike.
Only two simple words left the mouth holding the cigar.
“Game on.”
She held a unique Incense Grenade made by sticking a rolled-up yellow journalism newspaper in the top of a small liquor bottle. She then used the tip of the thick cigar to light a blue flame in the wet paper.
And she threw it.
Before it could hit the floor and break, Kyousuke flicked a glass pellet from his finger and fired it like a bullet with a horizontal swing of his Blood-Sign.
That was a piece of food for Phosphorous. The Artificial Sacred Ground would be established as soon as the bottle broke, so that seemed like a wasted action. The sound of shattering glass followed.
But it was not wasted.
Kyousuke’s pellet shot right past the airborne Molotov cocktail, ignored both the summoner and vessel, and broke through the wall there. No, it broke through the reinforced glass of the window embedded in the wall.
Once it hit the lever on the control panel there, a change occurred.
There were several loud crashing sounds overhead. The ceiling above separated this lower level area from the party hall above, but that split in two and transformed the two rooms into one giant space running vertically through the ship. Then a rumbling rose from below. The floor was really a fine wire mesh and there was a 30m propeller below that.
This was why Kyousuke had felt a creaking below his feet when he first stepped into the party hall.
An instantaneous blast of wind blew up from the floor.

Kyousuke and the others were freed from the bonds of gravity and flew straight up.
They flew more than 10 meters in no time.
The facility was built like a wind tunnel for testing the air resistance of cars or airplanes, except it was built vertically. It was actually a giant indoor skydiving facility that allowed them to film actors in midair scenes before adding in the high-quality VFX. To make the best use of the limited space on the ship, the single space could be divided up into multiple small studios or one large studio.
Of course, all of this also applied to the Molotov cocktail as it tried to fall to the floor.
As long as the small liquor bottle did not hit the ground and break, the Artificial Sacred Ground would not be established.
“Kh!!”
“You seem like the silent type, but shouldn’t you be more surprised than that?”
Luckily, the party above had already ended and the tables and dishes had been removed.
With indoor skydiving that used a powerful blast of wind from below, controlling air resistance was everything. You could ascend by spreading out your body to catch the wind and you could descend by folding up your body to reduce the resistance. By changing how you positioned your right and left arms and legs, you could intentionally put yourself in a tornado-like spin.
The lack of footholds was irrelevant.
While rapidly rotating, Kyousuke swung his Blood-Sign toward the side of the female prison guard’s head.
The summoner was still not used to this situation and had that weak point defenselessly exposed, but then a metal ball larger than a human head got in the way. Only after it deflected his attack did he realize what had happened. The girl in a striped prisoner’s uniform was flipped upside down and spinning like she was using capoeira. That had sent her ball and chain into Kyousuke’s Blood-Sign. Even after her defensive maneuver was complete, the girl with purple-dyed hair did not stop spinning. She was trying to break the palm-sized liquor bottle as it flew through the air.
“Oh, no you don’t!!”
Olivia then dropped down like a shooting star. Sinceria had said the girl was taking a program for figure skaters, so she may have had excellent balance and known how to spin quickly. And her small hands held a blunt weapon as effective as the metal ball. She was using the thick chain to swing down the bag-sized padlock she normally wore over her shoulder.
“Kh.”
The prisoner uniform girl avoided a direct hit by deflecting it with the metal ball, but she could not fully negate the shock to her body.

While Kyousuke caught Olivia in midair, the other vessel had no such safety. The momentum of the deflection remained with her and she slammed back-first into a nearby wall.
It was a stereotypical failure with indoor skydiving and it could even mean a broken bone.
“Fan!?”
The female prison guard shouted what seemed to be a name, but the striped prisoner girl did not respond. She must have passed out because she stared straight up with dead eyes with her limbs sprawled out around her.
And there was only one fate for a summoner who had lost their vessel.
Kyousuke grabbed the small liquor bottle with a yellow journalism paper stuck inside.
“You can have this back.”
“Kh!?”
The enemy did not have time to prepare herself.
A corner of the palm-sized bottle was swung down toward the female prison guard’s head and she was knocked out with the sound of shattering glass.
With a bluish-white flame that lacked any heat at all, the Artificial Sacred Ground belatedly appeared, so Kyousuke and Olivia ignored the intense wind and were sucked to the closest wall. Each level of the studio apparently had a monitoring room. Kyousuke carried the summoner in one arm and let Olivia carry the vessel as he fired a Repliglass pellet toward the reinforced glass that was now below their feet. That hit the lever and stopped the wind.
“This will only last 90 seconds. Let’s retrieve those two and then escape from the studio.”
He broke through the reinforced glass with his Blood-Sign and jumped into the monitoring room. Then the Chain state ended and the Artificial Sacred Ground vanished. If they had remained in the studio, they would have fallen several dozen meters.
They were in the top level monitoring room, so they had luckily escaped the lowest level.
“Now we need to get to the submarine hidden below this ship, right?”
“Right. Once we collect the things we left in the leisure room, let’s head back to the submersible.”
Kyousuke confirmed Olivia’s understanding of the situation.
“That’s when the fun really begins.”

Between the Lines 1

The intercom rang.
Each day, Aika the shut-in girl had visitors besides Shiroyama Kyousuke or Lu Niang Lan. During the afternoon, she would receive a delivery from an online store. During the morning, a caretaker would arrive to look after the 5m white liger.
Aika's luxury apartment kept enough frozen meat in stock to last the wild animal three days, but she still needed to resupply constantly.
Thanks to that, she could keep track of the passage of time quite well for a shut-in.
Despite being an apartment, there was a delivery entrance separate from the main entrance and a young woman in a work jumpsuit used that to push in a large hand truck like she was delivering the lactic acid product famous enough to support professional baseball teams.
"Good morning, Award 870."
"…Nn…"
"This is today's lot. I will carry away the waste boxes as usual."
Yes, the white liger ate several dozen kilograms of meat each day and all that food meant she also needed to use the bathroom.
The jumpsuit woman casually looked over the ferocious beast like it was an afterthought.
"No eye discharge or bloodshot eyes, teeth and gums look fine, base of the ears are fine, claws are fine, fur and oils are fine. …Okay, everything checks out. She is still the picture of good health."
"…I'm keeping an eye on her too, so you don't have to worry…"
"Hee hee. You've gotten a lot better at brushing her teeth, Award 870. She is scheduled for some professional oral care to remove the tartar three days from now. The usual on-site checkup is scheduled for 2 months from now, but please contact us if anything is worrying you. We can provide stress care with aroma and temperature therapy or provide a full-body massage using shiatsu and low frequency vibration."
The white liger may have been receiving better care than your average businessman. It apparently took a lot for a wild animal to live in the city. Fighting over rare services like reservations at fancy restaurants or the best seats at concerts was what the common folk did. True celebrities like Aika-chan would carve out a new life cycle wherever they saw the need.

After watching the jumpsuit woman leave, Aika pulled a club-like hunk of raw meat out of the 2m cubic container that had the same structure as a refrigerator. It was important to note that one side of the container had been replaced with a thick scratching board. In other words, this would only last one day at best.
“…Here you go, liger. Your lovely meat-on-the-bone has arrived…”
The wild animal had been curled up on the floor like a small sofa, but now she slowly got up. Unlike a poorly-trained dog, she did not immediately jump at the food.
The meat was still cold from the refrigerated container, so eating it now would make her sick. Aika piled several raw meat clubs on a party-sized platter and warmed them a bit in an extra-large oven separate from the one used for human food. In the meantime, the striped bikini girl poured some animal-safe milk into a baby bottle and pressed it against the white liger’s mouth to distract her. …Of course, that baby bottle was larger than a 2 liter bottle.
In the world of classy wild animals(?), there were apparently a lot that would demand meat from animals of their natural habitat, like gazelles or gnus, but the white liger that lived with Aika was a crossbreed of a white tiger and a lion, so she was an extraordinary carnivore that could not be found in nature. Aika did not worry about that too much and had chosen lean Australian beef after monitoring her partner’s responses to different meats. The white liger seemed to like that better than the fatty marbled kind.
The oven timer’s bell sounded and the white liger’s shoulders jumped. Her curious eyes darted back and forth between Aika’s face and the oven door. She may have been imprinted with a Pavlovian link between the timer sound and food. Aika removed the heated meat-on-the-bone from the oven and walked with the liger to the giant dining room.
The animal did not eat the food yet.
The white liger used all her strength to restrain herself until she was given permission.
Aika slowly lowered the large plate to the floor and then took three steps back.
“…Okay, eat up, liger…”
The liger took a leap and then produced a veritable explosion of chewing sounds. Those hunks of meat were thick enough to stop a small handgun bullet, but she crunched through the bone along with the meat. Even if the liger meant no harm, Aika would have been knocked away if she had carelessly approached.
Aika meanwhile took a jelly drink from the fridge.
She used the small butt inside her bikini bottom to push the fridge door shut and then used both hands to turn the plastic cap.
The striped bikini girl could not cook her own food, so her diet was best summed up as “luxurious but tragic”. Even when Lu Niang Lan made

something for her, the recipe was generally designed for someone who exercised regularly, so it did not always give the shut-in girl a balanced diet. For that reason, she had gained a habit of using one meal a day to make up for the part of her diet she had missed out on. It was the same idea as giving the liger her vitamins and minerals through extra-large toy bones.
“Ahm.”
(They’re saying now is the time to eat more protein, but that doesn’t really apply to me since I don’t get any exercise other than rolling around on the yoga mat while watching the guide video.)
Aika sat directly on the table instead of in a chair, placed the top of the jelly drink in her mouth, and picked up a notebook-sized tablet from a stand on the table. She lived in a large apartment, so it would be a pain to have to walk to a specific location whenever she wanted to use the computer. Instead, she had computers and mobile devices all over the place and synced together so she could see the same data no matter which one she was using. She really was a wealthy shut-in.
The tablet’s screen displayed some plain text.
Kyousuke had told her she was free to be a shut-in if she wanted, but that was not an excuse for failing to keep up with her studies. She somewhat agreed with that, so one box in her schedule was labeled “study” even though every day was summer break for her.
No matter what gap your life had fallen into, no one liked being called dumb.
A general world map was drawn on the tablet screen and red dots appeared on that. They covered the entire world, regardless of country or region.
And the question was as follows:
“As part of a philanthropic policy, a large civilian corporation provides economic assistance in order to revive cities around the world that have declined due to financial bankruptcy, declining population, environmental troubles, or rising crime rates. What is the name of the corporation that is leading this policy? Hint: The international revived cities are given the corporation’s name!”
After a moment of silence, Aika removed her finger from the tablet’s screen. She also removed the jelly drink from her mouth and breathed a quiet sigh. She only had to look at the name of Toy Dream 35 to know the answer. That giant corporation that provided dreams to children the world over was a source of great trauma for this girl, but the name returned to her no matter how much she tried to avoid it. That was now ubiquitous it was.
“…Toy Dream…”
Her trembling fingertips typed in the necessary answer and then she closed the text app.
She returned the tablet to the table stand and finally reached for a different electronic device.
It was a character smartphone that Toy Dream had created by buying up a service provider and social media company.

…And this one was based on *a heroine that should not exist*, so it was probably the only one that still existed.
The phone used an app that was like a cross between an email and a chat service. It was known as Assort Message and it allowed you to attach one illustration or icon of a Toy Dream character to each message. The address book linked to that app had only a single group and a few different addresses registered within.
For a reason other than high-level security, the majority of the 7 billion people in the world would not even know this one address existed.
It was an email link for the members of a certain family that was envied by all.
It was a direct hotline that let one contact the personal mobile phone of the extremely busy president of Toy Dream without even going through a secretary.
Kyousuke and Olivia were making an external attack on the mobile base created from a cruise ship in an attempt to track down the truth of the Silver Resource War.
But there was another way.
Someone deep on the inside could make a direct attack on the president.
"…"
Aika toyed with the address book for a while and then heard a low growl. Her partner, the white liger, poked her head above the table. The animal did not even need to climb up. With a 5m body, her head stuck above while sitting on the floor.
The white liger placed her chin on the tabletop and looked up at Aika where she sat on the table. The striped swimsuit girl giggled and placed her hand on the wild animal's head.
"Do you want seconds, liger? There's no helping you, is there?"
Aika lifted up her small butt and hopped down from the table, but she still held the character smartphone in her hand.
(It might be time I faced this war too.)
While walking to the refrigerated container that contained additional meat, the striped bikini girl placed her index finger on one part of the screen. She gently touched one address.
She was a girl who had vanished from the human race's memories.
She was the granddaughter of a certain family. And Aika Toydream quietly took action once more.

Facts

- Sinceria Highland has redone her contract more than anyone else in history. As a result, parts of her physical body have changed just like with Isabelle. But there is no sign of Sinceria's soul breaking or personality changing. The exact conditions for these things are unknown.
- It was revealed that footage of Kingdom F's civil war was used to produce the Blue Film that is meant to get the go ahead for the Silver Resource War. That is why Kingdom F's queen and knight chose to interfere in the incident.
- Award 999, War Criminal, the top of Illegal, was mentioned in connection to the defense of the Missing Princess.
- The System Atlantis VFX production mainframe was not located on the Missing Princess.
- Kyousuke grabbed and broke his enemy's Incense Grenade, but that counted as a belated detonation after being thrown by Eisen Rosen. An Incense Grenade's mixture pattern is designed to match a specific summoner, so using someone else's will not create an Artificial Sacred Ground.

Stage 02: The Treasure Chest is in the Frozen Undersea World

“If you’re insane, you creep me out. If you’re not, you’re scum.”
“Ha ha!! Just how highly do you view the ultimate grotesque creatures we call humans, Kyousuke-chan!?”
(Stage 02 Open 08/04 11:10)
The Treasure Chest is in the Frozen Undersea World

Part 1

Kyousuke kicked open the door to the leisure room.
The situation had changed.
“Olivia, we’re leaving!!”
“Eh? Ah? But I haven’t changed yet, Onii-chan!”
Kyousuke grabbed just one of the bag’s shoulder straps and grabbed Olivia’s slender hand before practically swinging them both around as he burst back out into the corridor. Changing clothes could help lose pursuit, but when the opponent had already spotted you, it was useless unless a few different requirements were met.
First, there had to be a crowd, like on the city streets or in a subway station. Second, you had to change quickly so the enemy did not catch you while you were changing.
Neither requirement was met here.
A few dry gunshots echoed through the straight corridor as they ran to the nearest staircase. There were now a few fingertip-sized holes in the bag, but it had apparently stopped the lead bullets. Kyousuke kicked down a nearby fire extinguisher to smash the jaw of a guard down the stairs and then ran past the large man as he writhed in pain.
(The ones immediately using guns are Illegal and the ones hesitating in confusion are normal guards. They’re wearing the same uniforms, but that’s how I can tell them apart!!)
He did the math in his head and set different levels of acceptable violence for the two categories. Although as Alice (with) Rabbit, killing was not an option for Shiroyama Kyousuke either way.
They needed to reach the starboard side where they had left their small submersible between the ship and the extra float attached by an arm. They could use that to escape into the ocean and lose their pursuers.
They first had to reach the deck level.
Kyousuke stopped at the connection between stairs and the corridor, pressed against the wall, and swung his Blood-Sign horizontally out when he heard footsteps approaching. He hit a guard with a lariat, knocking him over from the neck, and then kicked the groaning middle-aged man in the head to knock him out.
Once out in the corridor, a tremor ran through Kyousuke’s body.
“Onii-chan…?”
“…”

He slowly turned around without answering Olivia's worried question.
A summoner and vessel pair was already at the end of the long, long corridor.
It was Illegal Award 749, Railroad Executioner.
Needless to say, they were a protégé of War Criminal who led one of the three major powers.
"Cheh. How many did he bring with him!?" shouted Olivia while puffing out her cheeks.
The humongous steel railroad rail may have played the role of a Blood-Sign. That rusted mass of metal rested on the shoulder of a large shirtless man who wore a black hood and had a single lens reflex camera with a bazooka-like lens around his neck. The vessel standing next to him was a young girl who looked like a Western doll. She wore a suit with a tight skirt for what may have been a train conductor motif. She flipped through what looked like a time schedule on a clipboard. The pair usually dispassionately followed their schedule to hunt down and kill anyone within Illegal who broke their ironclad rules or blood bonds. They rarely left Illegal and thus were not blessed with many opportunities to earn Awards, so it would be best to assume their actual skill was 200 Awards above what they had.
The threat here was not the rusty metal rail Blood-Sign or Garuda, Sleipnir and other divine beasts they could summon from the Divine-class.
An executioner always produced results.
They were not allowed to and could not afford to make the mistakes that a judge might.
More and more loud slamming sounds filled the corridor. All the doors lining both walls were kicked open and men in black uniforms different from the guards stepped out.
(So they're not even hiding who they are anymore.)
And they were not about to take turns fighting one at a time.
Their aim was clear. The men in black would surround Kyousuke and Olivia within the straight corridor. If that defeated them, all was well, but if it did not, those men would risk their lives to hold them in place.
And afterwards…
"Thank you very much for taking our express train to hell. The doors will soon close, so please refrain from boarding now."
The small girl in a suit spoke with a strangely flat voice.
She climbed up the large muscular masked man's back like a squirrel and placed a jump rope around his thick neck. It was like a horse's reins…no, she was using him like a train. After taking a seat on his shoulders, the small girl continued her announcements which acted like a cursed song that placed the man into a trance. As the large shirtless man listened, his muscles swelled out to two or three times their size as if from a strange new form of doping.
Shiroyama Kyousuke clicked his tongue.
And then the final line arrived.

“Now, let us depart.”
An explosive din shook the air.
The difference between enemy and ally no longer mattered. The long straight corridor was the track of a runaway train. The enemy had ordered those men in black to charge into the corridor, but they were still knocked down by the rusted metal rail as the mass of muscle mercilessly approached Kyousuke and Olivia. The enemy summoner and vessel only cared that their men stopped the target long enough that they could defeat them. Personnel loss was baked into the plan.
There was no dodging it in the straight corridor.
And even if they threw an Incense Grenade now, they would be run over before the 3 seconds to detonation had passed.
“Olivia, this way!!”
Kyousuke knocked out the nearest man in black by jabbing his Blood-Sign between his eyes.
He did not stick to the corridor. He pulled on Olivia’s hand and rushed into a room on the right. A moment later, the giant mass passed by in the corridor and a powerful gust of wind blew through. There was no way it would end there, so Kyousuke used the slight lag to run to the window. They were already on the deck level, so if they opened the window and climbed out, they would arrive on the starboard side deck.
Naturally, the protection of the air conditioning vanished once they were on the deck.
Perhaps because they were out at sea, the August sun felt terribly humid.
Illegal would not stay in one place. The more than 100 men in black and the summoner pair would soon use other rooms’ windows to reach the side deck. And that side deck was a long straightaway itself, so that would change nothing.
“Onii-chan. Where did we stop the submarine again!?”
“We’re almost there. Just another 40 meters!!”
Just then, someone smoothly stepped out from behind one of the columns that looked more decorative than functional.
It was Sinceria Highland and Rachel Wormwood.
Government Award 913, Noble Bride passed them by.

Part 2

They did not really say anything.
They crossed paths like it was to be expected and the women took the delaying role.
“My, my, my, my.”
Was it meant to look like snow or ice, glass or crystal? Sinceria whispered happily in a cool blue dress and with her long blonde hair blowing in the sea breeze. She pressed her hands together in front of her large chest and smiled.
Her restraint as a vessel was not the glass and alloy crown that symbolized her right to the throne. It was the locket which reminded her of the family she had lost.
“I was right to leave her with you, Kyousuke. Hee hee hee. Having a gentleman take your hand and escort you across the battlefield is not something most people get to experience♪”
“All he’s doing is wander around without a clue what he’s doing.”
Rachel loosely crossed her arms near her hips and snorted from her shapely nose. The armed glasses knight tapped a finger against the battle hook at her hip.
“Hmph. But it does seem he has kept his promise of not allowing the princess to shed a single drop of blood. I am willing to give him the lowest possible passing grade.”
“Hee hee hee.”
“What is it, my queen?”
“Oh, nothing. Hee hee hee♪ Rachel, your cute snorts always mean the same thing. Hm, hm. Mutter, mutter, mutter. Hee hee hee hee hee hee♪♪♪”
“If you have something to say, just come out and say it!!”
With a great quantity of footsteps, purposefully-generic men in black exited through multiple windows. They initially ignored Sinceria and Rachel so they could pursue Kyousuke and Olivia, but…
“Wait, you insults to our kingdom.”
Silver flashed.
It was the athletic body rather than the intellectual glasses that came to the forefront here.
All of a sudden, she had drawn the battle hook from her hip, extended it to nearly 2 meters, and used the J-shaped end to catch one of the men in black

by the neck. A light pull forward knocked him to the floor like a poor criminal being dragged around by a rope attached to a horse.
Before caution could fill the air, the battle hook swung around like a baton some more. Sometimes it caught a man in black by the ankle, held him upside down, and dropped him to the deck. Other times, it grabbed a man in black by the belt and tossed him over the railing into the ocean.
The tension of the scene finally caught up to reality.
By the time the men in black recognized the new enemy, more than 10 of them had already been knocked out. The woman wore old-fashioned silver armor and a long wine-red tight skirt that seemed like it would restrict the movement of her legs. But even after achieving such incredible results, Rachel did not seem very excited. She simply tapped her shoulder with the battle hook and winked behind her glasses.
“Hmph. I don’t care what happens to that silly mercenary, but let’s not forget that a kingdom’s princess is traveling with him. It is time for a social studies lesson. I will give you a thorough first-hand lesson in exactly what happens to anyone who attempts barbaric acts in front of our princess for no good reason.”
“Hee hee hee. Tsundere, tsundere♪ Yes, yes. First Olivia and now Rachel. Kingdom F just keeps getting richer! I knew he was exactly what we needed. He may have refused once, but I absolutely must give Kyousuke a medal of national service.”
“Be quiet, my queen…!!!!!!”
What sounded like a shockwave rang out as the muscular masked man ignored the windows and broke right through the wall to reach the side deck. The Railroad Executioner summoner let out a steamy breath with his rusty metal rail Blood-Sign in hand. The small vessel girl slowly walked out after him while using a red pen to mark a document on her clipboard. Was the timetable her psychological restraint?
An oddly flat voice ruled that place.
Time and accuracy took precedence over all else.
“I must apologize to all passengers who are in a hurry, but our express train to hell is experiencing a delay. We will ascertain the cause and recover ASAP, so please wait inside the train for now.”
Her announcements acted as a cursed song. A trance that only applied to them must have given her complete control over his brain chemicals because energy was clearly raging within the large man’s body like a steam engine after more coal was shoveled in. His own bones began to creak under the strain of his trembling muscles.
Ascertain the cause and recover.
The men in black under their command did not hesitate to draw handguns.
And a dry sound rang out.
However…
“Too bad♪”

Sinceria held a hand in front of the knight’s face. That hand held a timer Incense Grenade that resembled a platinum pocket watch and it had a bullet embedded in it. It was clearly made from a cheap alloy, glass, and other inexpensive materials, but its value had been increased past the limit by royally appointed craftsmen. There was no need to turn the watch crown to set the dangerous hands because a 20m cubic Artificial Sacred Ground was already opening around it.
Everything up until now had just been the lead in to battle.
It was finally reaching the realm of summoners and vessels.
Sinceria Highland even licked her lips as the thrill of combat flushed her skin and released the seductively sweet poison she had been restraining all this time.
Her overly-long ears twitched and the locket at her chest twinkled.
“You need not hold back or show mercy. I will be your beautiful opponent. So bring it on♪”
“When my queen stands before you, it means you are facing our kingdom’s final line of defense. Foreign threats, if you have not brought the firepower and resolve needed to ruin an entire kingdom, then you will find yourself trampled!!”

Part 3

A few of the men in black continued pursuing Kyousuke and Olivia along the side deck. Sinceria and Rachel must not have been able to keep them all away, but they had done enough. Now that the human wave attack had thinned out, Kyousuke could use his Blood-Sign as a staff to knock down the enemy. More importantly, the frontline summoner, Railroad Executioner, was no longer after them.
“Olivia, jump in here!!”
“U-uwehhh! Looking down, this is really high-…hyahn!?”
They could not wait around, so Kyousuke picked up Olivia’s small body and immediately jumped over the railing. There was almost 10 meters to the ocean surface, which was about 3 floors.
They fell into the area of sea partitioned off by the ship itself and the additional float. Still holding Olivia, Kyousuke used just his feet to get his head above the surface. The heat island effect had thoroughly warmed the urban ocean, so it felt like sweaty skin and the clothing plastered to his skin felt as unpleasant as a crowded train.
“Pwah. Olivia, climb on there. Once we untie the rope, let’s take the submersible to the ocean floor.”
“…Onii-chan is princess carrying me… Wow…”
“Olivia.”
Had she hit her face when they landed in the water? Kyousuke’s brief shout dragged the double braid girl back to reality, so he pushed on her small butt to get her on top of the spindle-shaped submersible.
Still soaking wet, he untied the rope, raised the streamlined protective cover, and climbed inside with the girl. After closing the cover again, he aimed the nose down and parted the seawater.
The men in black must have noticed.
Several gunshots rang from the side deck above and the bullets piercing the ocean surface stabbed through the thick water like spears of white air bubbles.
“Onii-chan, what about the cooling sheets?”
“We don’t need them this time. In fact, they’d only leave us shivering in the cold.”
Regardless, they had won now that they were in the ocean. The enemy could not hit while forced to file blindly thanks to the bright sun reflecting off the surface.

As they dove deeper, the light faded like someone was twisting a dimmer switch. Yes, ocean water was not 100% transparent, so it would block the sun if a thick enough layer was in the way.
“?”
Just as the planet’s slight axial tilt altered the length of daylight time and thus created the seasons, things changed quickly once they lost the blessings of the sun.
“Onii-cha-…It’s kind of…eh? It’s really cold…?”
“We were dealing with a greenhouse effect before, but this is what happens when sunlight is removed from the equation. We aren’t directly in contact with the surface layer of seawater that has soaked up all the heat, so the change will be even faster for us than a diver.” Kyousuke hit a few buttons to turn on the lights. “I don’t see a nuclear sub anywhere… It looks like we might need to dive further than 100 meters.”
“Uuh, I’m soaked. Are you sure we shouldn’t have changed, Onii-chan?”
“We didn’t have time…as I already explained. And it’s August, so we aren’t going to catch cold.”
They voiced no concern for Sinceria and Rachel. They had already seen just how skilled those two were during Kingdom F’s civil war. A natural disaster or a crime would not be enough to kill them. That would take a war.
It would be one thing if Illegal Award 999, War Criminal, made an attack himself, but Kyousuke doubted his bodyguard forces could do anything. And since the core of the Blue Film was in the nuclear submarine and not the cruise ship, the odds were extremely good that War Criminal himself was waiting at the bottom of the ocean.
“Won’t they notice us if we’re shining the lights like this?”
“Submarines put more focus on sound and magnetism than light, so often times normal lights will actually create a blind spot. Sound travels a lot faster than in the air.”
Just as Kyousuke said that, a large torpedo shot right by the submersible, leaving a trail of white bubbles in its wake.
The war had begun.
The crude steel tube had nothing like a propeller. It combined chemicals to propel itself with the power of air.
No proximity fuse had activated and it passed right by them, but it pulled in the nearby seawater, shaking the small submersible.
“Oniiiii-chaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaan…?”
“That wasn’t because of the light. They probably detected the sound of us moving through the water. I can’t completely eliminate the noise even if I cut the engine.”
But Olivia should have thought more carefully about this.
If the enemy had a complete lock on them, they never could have avoided the torpedo. There had to be a reason why it had passed by the small submersible and exploded somewhere else entirely.

“A thermocline. …Ocean temperature is not fixed. The currents give it a marbled pattern. And sound travels differently through warm water and cold water. Soundwaves reflect weirdly on the border between layers, so sonar becomes useless. Whether it used soundwaves or a timer, they can’t hit us if the original location data was wrong.”
“Th-then can we safely descend…?”
“I’m not so sure. If they know there’s a thermocline, they can take countermeasures. More importantly, that shot stirred up the water, so it might have been temporarily mixed together like Italian dressing. This isn’t a repeatable method.”
As they continued down, Kyousuke guided the submersible toward a cliff-like shelf.
Three more torpedoes were fired, but none of them managed to hit. By intentionally reflecting their noise off of the rock wall, he could shift the apparent source of the noise.
“…Found it.”
They were in extreme danger where a single hit would tear their submersible to pieces, but Kyousuke did not bat an eye.
There was a large cigar shape lodged in the V-shaped gap between two rock shelfs. The small submersible’s lights illuminated a pitch black ship nearly 100m long. The ID number had been scraped off, but it was definitely a military product. It was a US Navy San Francisco-class nuclear submarine. Those had supposedly been decommissioned in accordance with the Strategic Arms Platform Reduction Treaty signed with Russia 3 years prior, but this one at least had apparently been secretly sold to a civilian buyer. Its combat ability may have been completely removed before being sold, but parts acquired via a different route could be used to repair that. Besides, simply selling a nuclear-powered sub was an unprecedented problem and in violation of the standards.
“Come to think of it, Onii-chan, didn’t the Ghost Ship Sebastian movie released this spring have a talking submarine for a main character? It was about a baby sub going an adventure through the seven seas in search of his mom.”
“Can that old man turn anything into a hit…?”
Meanwhile, the small submersible approached the nuclear sub waiting on the ocean floor. Using soundwaves to detect enemies was super effective in the water, but there was one surprising weakness: you could not detect something right up alongside you. That was of course because the noise made by your own great size would drown out the enemy reading.
“Now, let’s make our home visit.”
“Nweh? Onii-chan, how are we supposed to get onboard? If we open this protective cover, the water will come rushing in, won’t it?”
“This submersible Lu-san gave us is usually used by Illegal to make illicit deals in the dead of night. It has arms for grabbing packages in the dark

ocean and it can dock with other ships. The other ship’s hatch format doesn’t matter here.”
The San Francisco-class was covered by a thick hull built to resist the immense water pressure and explosive blasts, but that hull was not made from a single smooth panel. In addition to the boarding hatch on the bridge where the normal periscope was, there was the ballast tank’s water intake, torpedo launch tubes on the front, and 12 vertical-launch mass drivers on the top. It had plenty of seams that acted as openings.
The sturdiest of them would of course be the boarding hatch.
Kyousuke checked the pressure sensor on the control column’s grip and tried moving the two arms.
“Good, good. That’s an Illegal smuggling submersible for you. It’s pretty sensitive to make sure they don’t damage the waterproof package. Hmm, so this is how you grab things.”
“Onii-chan, what are you going to do about all that rock in the way?”
“If there’s no accessible entrance, we’ll just have to make a new one.”
Kyousuke looked entirely unconcerned. “If we make some noise, they’ll open up the hull themselves to begin the torpedo launch process. We’ll provide them something more than water to flood the tube. And once the tube is clogged, the torpedo will blow open a hole for us.”

Part 4

A violent explosive blast disconcertingly shook the giant steel submarine.
“It detonated in the tube! The 3rd launch tube has ruptured!!”
“Have we set up a seal? Prepare the pumps and filler material! This is a race against time, so just don’t let the water in!! And keep the sub balanced!!”
Seawater was of course the most frightening thing to a submarine crew. Damage from a torpedo or mine, scraping the hull on the rocks, getting a net or wire caught in the propeller, and so many other things could lead to drowning in seawater. While it did happen sometimes, it was rare for flames, smoke, or an explosive blast to directly kill them. They were working in an environment inhospitable to human life, so destroying the artificial environment they created for themselves would remind them they were on the ocean floor and their lives would be readily snuffed out. Returning their environment to normal would kill them. This was different from “unnaturally taking a life” by firing a bullet or shell at them on the surface.
However. The crew frowned when they brought filler material like metal beams and thick rubber sheets to fill the large hole in the torpedo launch tube.
There was indeed seawater flowing in, but not very much.
“What? Did the wreckage of the torpedo clog it up?”
The water was only trickling out like from a sewer pipe on a muddy river wall, so a young crewmember tried to peer inside the launch tube.
Immediately, Shiroyama Kyousuke shot out like it was a water slide and the heel of his shoe caught the defenseless crewmember on the bridge of the nose.
He then spun around his long and narrow Blood-Sign.
“And we’re in.”
“W-wah. Waaaaah!?”
Before the crew could actually do anything, Kyousuke used the Blood-Sign to strike the young crewmembers on the back of the neck, on the side of the head, or in the middle of the gut to quickly knock them out.
Olivia crawled out of the torpedo tube a little later.
“I’m soaking wet… Huh? Did it not attach properly?”
“Well, this wasn’t a proper hatch, so there was only so much it could do.”

Kyousuke and Olivia had attached the bottom of the small submersible to the hole in the torpedo tube using a large, remora-like suction cup and then they had moved the seat to open the bottom. By connecting the submersible to the submarine, they had been able to enter the latter through the damaged torpedo tube.

The torpedoes would have been fired by the defense unit sent by Illegal, but who had originally supplied the equipment? Had Toy Dream acquired the parts and gotten them back in working order, or had Illegal revived that functionality for this mission?

(Either way, the submarine's very existence is a secret, so they don't have to worry about anyone seeing what happens in here. We should assume we'll run into some even nastier people onboard.)

“The fabric is clinging to me all over. Uuh, and I don’t like how it feels in the crotch.”
Olivia looked troubled and moved her fingers to the butt below her pareo to fix the swimsuit. When she did, a clear liquid left the base of her legs and flowed down her inner thighs.
The blonde double braid girl seemed to notice Kyousuke’s eyes on her because she blushed and began stammering.
“…Just so you know, Onii-chan, this is only seawater. It isn’t anything weird.”
“I know.”
“Huh? This is odd. I had heard Japanese swimsuits had this weird hole here so the water that gets in through the chest could get back out more easily. Is it really working?”
“You don’t have to stick your hand into that tunnel. More importantly, Olivia, help me tie all of them up.”
It was unclear how she decided what qualified as embarrassing, but Kyousuke tossed her some zip ties.
“Once their arms and legs are bound, we’ll remove them from this room.”
“Oh? Onii-chan, you know how to use these in addition to the Japanese-style rope?”
She was clearly mistaken about something there, but now was not the time to argue.
The hole had not been filled with filler material, so even at a trickle, the flooding was continuing. Kyousuke and Olivia bound the unconscious crewmembers’ hands behind their backs and tossed them into the corridor. After making sure there was no one left, they shut the steel door from outside and turned the round handle.
“Huh, so even submarines have air conditioning. I thought it would be sweltering and full of exhaust.”
“The San Francisco-class is nuclear-powered, so the turbine is always turning. Unlike the battery-powered subs, they can’t completely cut the power to go silent, so there’s no real reason to not use air conditioning.”
The room temperature was only lightly cooled, so it was actually more comfortable than the cruise ship above which had been like a supermarket’s vegetable section.
All of the submarine’s doors were watertight, so if they were all shut, any flooding could be contained to a single room. And that limited volume would not be enough to throw off the submarine’s balance and make it roll over.
There was only one thing to worry about: Once the torpedo loading room filled with water, they would lose their route back to the submersible waiting outside. They would either have to find another way to the surface or acquire some legitimate diving suits to travel through the flooded area.
“Still…”
After sealing the watertight door, Kyousuke glanced around the corridor again.

The San Francisco-class had been mass produced. Since multiple identical submarines had been built at the same shipyard, there were more opportunities to acquire an accurate layout diagram. But Toy Dream and then Illegal could have made any number of additions and modifications. They could not fully trust that diagram.
For one thing, the standard model would not have had this kind of interior. The dark gray and unrefined corridor took many twists and turns. The walls and ceiling were absolutely covered in large pieces of paper. They depicted long silver hair worn in twintails and an outfit that looked like a white wedding dress cut down to size with silver armor added in places.
Needless to say, these were portraits of the White Queen.
All mechanical cameras and sensors ceased to work when an Incense Grenade detonated, so they were all hand-drawn. They stirred up odd emotions, like when seeing the police use professionally-made sketches of a wanted criminal even in the modern day.
The people who wanted to start the Silver Resource War were apparently after the deposit of special silicon in the giant mountains around Kingdom F because that silicon's crystal structure miraculously contained just the right impurities in just the right amounts. And they had set up an unbelievable system where the countries and regions hit by the flames of war would be thrown into the large box labeled "East Europe Axis".
They wanted to combine cutting-edge Repliglass tech with the ancient Joruri Method to create an artificial vessel capable of perpetually summoning the White Queen.
They wanted to create a powerful anchor to re-solidify the White Queen now that word of her being killed was shaking her absolute position.
So it was true they might need portraits of the White Queen from multiple angles as reference material for the doll.
But when Kyousuke felt a strange shiver down his spine, it was not because of all the images of the White Queen's beautiful form filling this space.
"…What…is this?"
Olivia was also dumbfounded as her wet body shook.
The eyes had been torn out. Countless blade slashes ran across the mouth. A red pen had drawn Xs all over it…
Each and every one of the portraits had been destroyed.
Kyousuke held his Blood-Sign tight and Olivia clung to his waist from the side as they slowly walked further in. Then his shoes reached something like gravel. A volleyball-sized piece of marble lay at the corner between the corridor floor and wall. It took a moment to realize it was a statue's decapitated head after the surface had been thoroughly carved down with a chisel.
This was more than just persistent. It was obsessive.
It was more than just hate. It was a backlash. The messy spiral of emotions ruling this space was like someone had gone around destroying the very

things they had gathered out of love. The oxygen level would not have changed, but an eerie oppressiveness hit Kyousuke like an invisible wall. This was the chaos brought on by the Queen's death.
People were resorting to strange and destructive acts now that the foundation of their belief had been shattered.
There was an old *urban legend* that someone's mentality could be deduced from the lineup in their bookcase or the layout of their room. That was more an issue of folklore than science, but Kyousuke could not help but rely on it here.
(Did those belong to Toy Dream…? No, then they would have arranged the light sources, temperature, and humidity when doing the sub's interior. These must have been brought in by Illegal. *They were not destroying something adorning the walls. They brought their collection here for the express purpose of destroying them and creating this scene.*)
"Hmm, they sure were thorough. It looks like they don't completely hate her."
"Uwehh? It looks like they want to kill her to me…"
"They're lashing out in hatred because the White Queen got herself killed, but they still have some hope deep in their hearts. Hope that it's all a lie. That's why they only have portraits of the White Queen. I don't see any materials based on the Colorless Little Girl that killed her."
They had brought along their precious items in order to destroy them here. If they simply hated her, they would not go to the effort of carrying the collection this far. They would not have taken it anywhere at all.
"Hmm? So which is it? Do they love the White Queen or hate her?"
"I think they're trying to have it both ways. Just like someone trying to guess the murderer in a mystery novel, they can't decide on a single person. By setting up a defensive line for every possibility, they can say they saw it coming no matter who it ends up being."
Did they love or hate the White Queen?
Would they side with the White Queen or the Colorless Little Girl?
…The person who had made this scene could picture every possibility in their mind, but they could not decide on just one. So they were simply putting off making a decision while making it look like they were thinking about it. They told themselves there was no helping it because the answer had already been determined. They would tell themselves they were fine because they had seen it coming from the beginning. They might try to act all-knowing, but to someone a step removed, they had the dark eyes of someone who had lost all hope and they were simply floating aimlessly like a balloon in the wind.
And that made them hard to predict.
In the end, this was the kind of person who would smugly say things were going "according to their calculations" even if they tripped, hit their head on a pebble, and died. Shiroyama Kyousuke had to predict the actions of

someone who did not know what they themselves would do. This could be far more trouble than dealing with the most meticulously planned crime.
"…"
"O-Onii-chan. The original data of that weird video is here, right? Let's destroy System Atlantis and get out of here. I don't want to stay here long and I don't want to see the person who made this. This is an atmosphere we can't – just can't – bring to Kingdom F."
"No."
Kyousuke shook his head.
While not to the extent of a cruise ship or aircraft carrier, a submarine required a fair number of people to operate. And yet they had seen no sign of a crew since those in the original torpedo loading room.
Why was no one confronting them?
Who was keeping them away?
Those questions led Shiroyama Kyousuke to the following conclusion:
"Looks like it's too late already."
They heard solid footsteps.
Illegal Award 999, War Criminal.
He was the leader of one of three major powers that dealt in the Summoning Ceremony. He was the world's greatest criminal who had taken an individual's crimes so far that he had taken a step into the realm of war.
He matched the photo from before.
He looked the same as when Kyousuke had made those five soul-rending surprise attacks in the past.
He had lazily-combed, close-cropped hair and a completely average height.
He was a very generic boy in a rough baseball practice uniform that did not even have a team name on it.
In this case, it was wrong to find it anticlimactic.
War Criminal had already achieved many records, reigned at the top of Illegal, and was known both inside and outside Illegal for possessing the skill to take on Government Award 1000, the tyrannical Elvast Toydream.
So.
This meant the person who stood at the top of every last criminal organization was the Boy A who stood by anyone's side. A shudder of terror was the correct response to that fact.
Boy A had the close-cropped hair of a baseball boy and wore black sunglasses as if they symbolized something.
There was no bridge at the nose, so they had a ruler-like shape and resembled a wicked blindfold.
"Hi, Kyousuke-chan. How've you been?"
"…"
"Ha ha ha! It's your old friend, Irigaru Tarou. Now then, Kyousuke-chan. Are you wondering if I have a bunch of body doubles or if I'm a stunt expert?"

As the top of Illegal roared such an obviously fake name[1] that it could have been on a sample form at a bank or post office, Kyousuke kicked something with the heel of his shoe.
He kicked up a dropped handgun like he was juggling a soccer ball.
Shiroyama Kyousuke of all people did not hesitate to pull the trigger.
Multiple gunshots rang out and Olivia reacted more than War Criminal. She covered her ears and curled up. Some of the bullets flew straight and others ricocheted off the thick steel walls. The lead projectiles used multiple angles and time delays to essentially surround Boy A as they flew toward him.
Several dry sounds followed.
“Uuh…”
An obedient girl groaned in embarrassment.
The leader going by the name Irigaru Tarou had a girl of about the same age standing next to him. Her wavy, reddish-chestnut hair was simply tied back in two bunches that were not quite twintails and she wore no makeup. She had a decent body, but she was a book girl with a vanishing presence. But despite that impression, she wore a pure white bunny suit with a tailcoat-like vest.
No, there was one motif even stronger than the bunny ears and suggestive tights.
As she tearfully blushed and shrank down, a large flapping noise came from her back. The objects there looked as solid as hard plastic yet moved smoothly. If this model was based on an existing animal, then they may have been swan wings. However, they were dyed a dark red, so they were more reminiscent of a fallen angel. It was a depressing and profane coloring, like seeing a wedding dress colored blood red. And those wings had spread out like a large umbrella to block and knock back all of the bullets Kyousuke had fired. Her wavy, reddish-chestnut hair may have been tied back in two bunches in order to give those dark red swan wings space to move on her back. They must have been a collection of microlattices because they could spread out to a far greater size than their initial appearance suggested.
She held a fairly cheap-looking tote bag to her stomach with both hands. It may have been the prize for gathering the stickers from convenience store bread. Thanks to that, her arms pushed together her surprisingly large breasts.
“No! Stay…away!!”
Her shoulders shrank down and she squeezed her eyes shut, but that graceful behavior was belied by how the blood red swan wings swung out with such ferocious force.
“…”
Kyousuke wordlessly fired some more and watched as the oxidized-blood-colored wings spun around like a tornado.
Once the handgun was out of ammo, Kyousuke did not hesitate to throw it aside.

“You implanted Repliglass directly into your vessel’s skeleton? But once the Summoning Ceremony battle begins, no cameras or sensors can see us. And that includes your vessel as she operates that. Did you put her through the risk of rejection, infection, and mechanical malfunction just to protect yourself against surprise attack?”
“Don’t criticize me like that. I’ll cry? Repliglass is the symbol of Government, so it’s a sign of wealth for us and our inferior tech. Reputation is crucial for a criminal organization. I’m not interested in nuclear weapons or stealth fighters. I want something with such great value that it shows off *that there’s nothing I can’t get my hands on*. It seems weird to me too, but trust is of the utmost importance in the underworld. Ha ha!!” The generic Boy A laughed with his eyes hidden by the horizontal line of his ruler-like sunglasses. “And that’s not what matters here. You were testing to see if my aide would stop the bullets when you attacked with deadly force, weren’t you? No matter how excellent the lackey, they wouldn’t risk their life for a replaceable body double. Whiiiich meeeeans that’s convinced you, hasn’t it?”
It was not Kyousuke whose shoulders jumped up in shock. It was the fallen angel, who was trembling in embarrassment from the mismatched outfit she had been made to wear.
Kyousuke narrowed his eyes when he saw it.
“I see. I may have been looking at this wrong.”
“Ohh. Now you’re focused on her? Yeah, making these alterations to my childhood friend might’ve been a mistake. She was originally the kind of person who would come running to my room cause she couldn’t watch a rented horror movie on her own. That’s all changed after I messed with her a bit, though.”
“That girl is ultimately motivated by fear, not love, War Criminal. You yourself are a war that causes tremendous damage all around you, but the one surefire way to avoid that damage is to be the vessel by your side. You could think of it like the eye of the storm. …She might look obedient on the surface, but that’s sort of like Stockholm syndrome where a hostage is so desperate to read the criminal’s slightest emotions in order to protect themselves that they end up empathizing with them and developing a temporary affection for them. That reaction couldn’t be duplicated with a body double because your skill is needed for it to develop. So I’ll have to go with the stunt theory instead of the body doubles.”
The cowering girl’s trembling increased explosively.
“Uuuuh… Uuuuuuh!!”
She groaned like a shabby dog chained to a post. Her spiteful eyes told him not to reveal too much and not to take away the eye of the storm, but Boy A himself did not seem bothered by the accusation of false trust.
No.
He may have never really understood what trust was.
The close-cropped hair boy was not even looking in the vessel’s direction.

“Aren’t you gonna ask?”
“Ask what?”
“There are standard questions for times like this: Why did you do this? How much work did you put into making a Toy Dream non-executive director your pawn? Why do you want to use the Blue Film to start the Silver Resource War? Y’know, checking your answers.”
Kyousuke gave a short snort.
And he laughed.
“…Like you would have a good reason.”
“I’m offended you would say that.”
The generic boy laughed in a tone that would rub anyone the wrong way and smiled behind the horizontal line of his sunglasses.
Then he spoke words that sounded like some kind of curse.
“An artificial vessel made of Repliglass. Well, I guess it would be more like overclocking than creating an anchor. Materials are temporarily summoned from another world and used here. So if they’re summoned wrong, they lose power, but the opposite is also possible. That’s what an artificial vessel made of special silicon will do. The White Queen was apparently killed while in her base state, so now we’ll use human tech to strengthen her. I guess it’s similar to the experiment run with Pandemonium.”
That Deltaston Family that led that project had been a special group that encompassed Government, Illegal, and Freedom. That would explain how information on the technique had reached Illegal.
The White Queen was not enough.
So they would use their clever human brains to elevate her to even greater heights.
…Had humanity made no progress since the Queen’s Miniature Garden? Or had the sense of danger faded and been reset, like with the memories of war?
Did this Boy A realize it or not?
Regardless, he continued speaking with a voice as heavy as coal tar.
“You’d normally figure this out, right? You’d normally be able to do this much, right? And if you can do it, you’d normally go ahead and actually do it, right? So I did it. That’s the only reason I had. There’s nothing majorly twisted about this. *Just think about it normally and anyone could figure it out, right?*”
“…”
“Did you think this was the ramblings of a lunatic? Hey, Kyousuke-chan, you think too highly of the word ‘normal’. Who was it that sold out their neighbors with dark smiles on their faces during the witch hunts? Who was it that spread mistaken training methods without feeling a shred of responsibility? Who is it that’s still passionately supporting the income of the drug cartels? …The darkness of history doesn’t come from the serial killers and dictators with special minds. Drug lords can only do so much on their own. The people you really need to fear are *the faceless Person As* who

can be found all over the world. Kyousuke-chan, you're always being watched by the As you would never suspect. Those are the pieces of shit who will kill millions and then casually claim they're the real victims."
The White Queen was powerful, but she did not intentionally drive people insane.
It was the world and human race around her that grew twisted on their own.
However.
"The White Queen doesn't matter."
Boy A smiled coldly as the one who had destroyed all of the pictures of the Queen plastered across the walls and ceiling.
"Humanity is garbage whether she's with us or not. We'll just find another symbol, worship that, go nuts, and cause more damage. I worship the White Queen in the same way. It's like finding a new waifu each season. Ha ha. If a Red Queen or Blue Queen took the title of the strongest, I bet I'd worship her without even questioning it."
"…So that's why you're trying to have it both ways? So you can laugh and say it all went according to your calculations whether your overclocking works and you strengthen the White Queen or it doesn't work and Colorless Little Girl worship covers the planet?"
"It doesn't matter."
"Even though we're talking about how you live your life?"
"I simply wanted something that wouldn't break. I wanted a support that wouldn't be shaken even if it was hit with a war. I needed some solid rock to drive in the piton for my lifeline. That's why I worshiped her. *Not cause she was the White Queen.* There was something stronger than me in the world, so I used that great being to support myself. She could've been red or blue for all I cared. It just so happened that the she was white, so I placed my faith in that. That's all."
It was strange, but even members of criminal organizations had religious faith.
For example, a gang hitman would wear a cross around their neck or have a tattoo of the Virgin Mary on their back. They lived lives of a formless anxiety telling them they would be punished in an unexpected way if they strayed from the path they had set for themselves.
"The basic plan is to incite Toy Dream into spreading the Blue Film that will bring about the Silver Resource War. And in the confusion, I can nab all the crystal resource needed to create the Queen lookalike for the perpetual summoning. Then my artificial vessel can overclock the failing Queen. …*But the success of that overclocking doesn't really matter.* We just want to know what color stands at the top of the world. If strengthening the White Queen allows her to keep her spot at the top, that's great. If that isn't enough, then we'll switch over to the Colorless Little Girl. We're not fixated on a single thing here. We just want to know which is the winning side this season. We'll worship them, use them up, and throw them out. That's how normal

humans work. ‘I’ve always been a fan.’ ‘I knew you would win.’ ‘I was rooting for you on my blog, telling everyone you were my team.’ It’s not so bad when it comes to mechanical businesses. The real horror comes from the normal, everyday humans who have no idea what they’re doing. *They feel no responsibility at all when they choose or abandon someone. They’re grotesque creatures who will distort their own memories as long as it makes them feel good.”*

Olivia’s small hand grabbed Kyousuke’s wet hoodie. And she was not the only one feeling an indescribable tingle of fear. The vessel girl, who was forced to wear suggestive clothing and even had her body modified, was trembling in a different way now.

Sometimes it had been out of love and sometimes it had been out of hate. Kyousuke had seen several people who were fixated on the White Queen. Azalea Magentarain, Benikomichi Fuuki, Biondetta Shiroyama, Himekawa Mika, Akura Taisaku, Elvast Toydream…and more recently, Olivia Highland and Doctor S.

It had been obsessive, insane, and hopeless, but they had risked their lives and futures for the path they had started down.

But this was different.

Kyousuke spat out some words without rejecting the strange feeling.

“If you’re insane, you creep me out. If you’re not, you’re scum.”

“Ha ha!! Just how highly do you view the ultimate grotesque creatures we call humans, Kyousuke-chan!?”

War Criminal reached a hand out to the side.

His book girl of a vessel reached into the tote bag she held in front of her with both hands and she pulled out a hand grenade with a handle. The explosive looked like a maraca or a club with a fat end. She pulled the string on the bottom of the handle and threw it toward Kyousuke and Olivia.

There was not much space inside the submarine.

Swinging his Blood-Sign for a homerun would be difficult. Besides, if he eliminated the supernatural element and challenged them to a normal battle, he would be up against a vessel whose body had been modified. Those solid and dark-red swan wings had instantly knocked down every last bullet he had fired their way. It was hard to keep one’s distance in the complex layout of the submarine, so if that monster rushed toward him, he would be unable to avoid the rush of blows. Thus, it would be best to wait for the Incense Grenade to detonate and battle using the Summoning Ceremony.

Or so the enemy wanted him to think.

“Olivia!!”

“Nweh!?”

The small girl had started to wait, so Kyousuke grabbed and tugged on her hand while reaching for a nearby watertight door. The submarine’s doors were even thicker steel than the cruise ship’s. As soon as he opened it wide as a shield, the grenade exploded.

Yes.
It sent out a perfectly normal explosive blast along with anti-personnel fragments.
If they had waited for the Artificial Summoning Ceremony instead of using a shield, the wall of destruction would have hit their entire bodies within the narrow space. Olivia only wore some synthetic fabric fully soaked with seawater, so a single graze from a fragment would have taken out a large chunk of her flesh.
Meanwhile, the enemy must have done it in the off chance that he got a lucky shot. A careless voice reached them through the smoke.
“Tch. So you used your dirty mind to figure it out. I guess it takes one to know one. Nothing scarier than a normal human, huh?”
“Illegal…!!”
“Ha ha. That’s right. There’s nothing special about us. This is the honest malice that any human carries inside!!”
The name of his group told you exactly what he believed. After all, he was the evil leader who brought together all of the world’s criminal organizations. It had been wrong to expect him to play fair and square in the first place. Kyousuke dropped a hairspray-can-sized Incense Grenade at his feet behind the metal door shield to make the challenge himself.
“Oh, oh.”
The suggestive fallen angel staggered as soon as the Artificial Sacred Ground opened up. Now that the cameras and sensors no longer worked, the connection between her body and the machine had been severed. War Criminal had thoroughly modified his vessel partner’s body and he liked to play dirty…but that did not mean his skill was lacking.
The 20m cube had appeared.
But they barely had any room to move inside the submarine. The Summoning Ceremony was beginning at unprecedented close range.
“Goodbye, War. This time…this time I will bring an end to your slaughtering…!!”
“Ha ha!! A death match at close quarters? And stop putting on airs, cheater. You act like you alone are observing humanity from the outside!!”

Part 5

Multiple swishing sounds sliced through the air.
A 150cm Blood-Sign rapidly rotated in War Criminal's right and left hands… but that was not all.
Those two sticks kept a third one airborne despite no one touching it.
The two sticks were in constant contact with the third one's sides to catch at it and lift it up.
"A devil stick?"
Olivia expressed skepticism about that juggling action, but they did not have time to worry over every bit of their opponent's trickery. While he used a juggler's illusion to swap around the sticks until it was unclear which was the third, the clock was already ticking.
The 6 x 6 x 6 – for a total of 216 – red Petals had formed the three-dimensional cube of the Rose.
36 Spots had appeared in midair.
And as soon as they appeared, white lightning raced through the submarine. Both Kyousuke and Boy A launched their White Thorns with frightening speed. A single attack shattered the red cube, causing countless Petals to scatter across the narrow corridor and ricochet wildly.
Both vessels were transferred according to the acquired Petals.
Olivia was the Original Yellow (s). Cost: 1. Sound Range: High.
The fallen angel was the Original Yellow (s). Cost: 1. Sound Range: High.
They both became translucent yellow slime Materials.
<Onii-chan, we're equally powerful…!>
"Then I just have to change that."
The enemy would be thinking the same thing. Blood-Signs rotated in War Criminal's hands and in the air before him.
The third one slipped through the first two and shot straight out when the time came to hit one of the fist-sized white balls of light.
<That was fast! But you only start with 3 White Thorns!!>
If the enemy acquired a large number of Petals quickly, Kyousuke would have no chance of winning. And that could be countered with a number of interference tactics like hitting their White Thorn with one of your own to knock it directly into a Spot or using a Petal to hit and take control of a Petal they had hit.
"!!"
But Kyousuke held back at the last second.

It was not a White Thorn that War Criminal's Blood-Sign had launched. It was only a glove balled up to look like one. Kyousuke had only had a split second to make his decision and being lured into firing a White Thorn would have wasted a precious shot.
"Ha ha!! So you won't screw up that easily, huh!?"
War Criminal was the head of Illegal, one of the three major powers. At Award 999, he had been able to take on Elvast Toydream, a different leader who had reached Government 1000. At the same time, he was an embodiment of the concept that a faceless neighbor could be war itself.
What did that mean?
Boy A hid his eyes behind the horizontal line of his ruler-like sunglasses and he gave no thought at all to playing by the rules in single combat. He relied on trickery through and through. He was dedicated to illusions. He invited his opponent to recklessness, lured them to self-destruction, and dragged them into a bog without giving them a chance to utilize their skill. It did not matter to him if the opponent before his eyes was higher ranked or a great army. By the time they noticed their misunderstanding, the tragic damage would have spread too far and no one could lower their raised fists.
It would become a hopeless war where the original cause no longer mattered.
You could call him a feint specialist, but as seen in professional soccer, luring someone with your gaze or footwork required excellent fundamental abilities. Feints were not the fangs of the weak. They were but one of the claws and horns of the strong.
What was the greatest form of cheating?
It was to hold the position of strongest through old-fashioned hard work and yet use all of that for cheap tricks. Just like excellent metal engraving skills could create the plates for counterfeit money, just like the forensics techniques used to track down criminals could make mafia revenge easier, and just like the acting skill to gain the trust of countless people could be used to scam people. Putting in hard work to make easy money sounded like an oxymoron and it felt like not obeying the rules even for those who did not obey the rules.
Kyousuke thought about it and clicked his tongue.
"…You really do live up to the name Illegal through and through, don't you?"
"So you noticed, Kyousuke-chan? You might be scornfully drawing a line between the two of us, but you're plenty evil if you ask us!!"
And since he had the fundamental abilities, he was plenty strong even when his feints did not succeed.
His attempt had failed, but he still had a solid chance.
He embodied the stability that anyone involved in crime desired, whether they acted alone or in a group.
More and more sounds of ricochets burst out as Kyousuke and Boy A knocked plenty of Petals into the Spots. The Materials also changed form,

but neither side could gain much of a lead in the Regulation-class. The battlefield quickly ascended to the Divine-class.
Set.
Divine-class. Cost: 3. Sound Range: High.
An evil usurper god in Egyptian Mythology. The killer of the good god Osiris. A black god who ruled over thirst which symbolized death in the desert.
Loki.
Divine-class. Cost: 4. Sound Range: Middle.
A traitor from within the Aesir in Norse Mythology. A liar god who created many of the gods' enemies, used his words to befuddle enemy and ally alike, and attacked Asgard with an evil army during the final battle of Ragnarok.
Prometheus.
Divine-class. Cost: 10. Sound Range: Middle.
The hero of civilization in Greek Mythology. A superficial being who stole fire, the secret of the gods, and gave it to man, which ultimately led to the misfortunes of Pandora's Box reaching the entire human race.
(Tch. Did he stock up on Petals as much as he could and then suddenly drive up his Cost!?)
Was this sudden Cost difference another one of War Criminal's feints?
All of the Divine-class Materials used by Boy A, whose eyes were covered by his ruler-like sunglasses, were people who had been on the gods' side yet betrayed heaven or the gods. But those evil gods were also necessary evils whose betrayals had given shape to their respective mythologies and religions.
They were beings who would have remained hidden had it not been for the Blood-Sign method.
Was using them another form of Illegal's blasphemy?
"Hh!!"
Kyousuke did not stick with a single god either. Again and again, he used his White Thorns to knock Petals into Spots to remake his Material.
Waltraute.
Divine-class. Cost: 9. Sound Range: High.
The fourth of the nine Valkyrie sisters in Norse Mythology. Her name meant courage on the battlefield. Only the eldest sister Brunhild did anything of note, but that was not an issue when using the Blood-Sign method. There was often a margin of error between the actual mythological hierarchy and their strength when summoned in the Summoning Ceremony which was ruled by letters and Sound Ranges. Perhaps it would be simpler to describe it as *how easy it was to draw out their power*. Using this method, Odin had a Cost of 4 and his beloved steed Sleipnir had a Cost of 8, so looking just at Cost, Sleipnir had double Odin's score.
A Cost 9 warrior maiden and a Cost 10 hero of civilization.

The previous difference had been so great that Kyousuke and Olivia were still behind in the pure numbers, but they forced their way past that with the Sound Range compatibility.
The large man had a large chain attached and, when he roared, the flames that symbolized his great sin burst from all of his joints.
<Oh, no you don't!!>
But the flames missed their target because the Valkyrie, who wielded a long cross spear and a diamond-shaped shield, vanished into thin air. The legends stated that Fourth Sister Waltraute had escaped detection by the gods to visit Eldest Sister Brunhild and tell her of a threat to the world.
The flames scattered in every direction, burning and discoloring the White Queen portraits covering the walls and floor, but Waltraute ran straight forward under Olivia's control and slipped through the hellfire tsunami. The warrior maiden suddenly appeared in front of the large shirtless man and gathered strength in the cross spear held in her right hand.
"Stop, Olivia!! Don't break through the outer wall!!"
<!>
Kyousuke heard the girl's gasp directly in his mind.
She quickly sent out the diamond shield in her left hand like a hook in boxing and tried to break through Prometheus's cheekbone as if with the point of a shovel. This was more than just grabbing the reins of the rampaging Material to guide it in the direction of the target. Only Olivia could control a Material so precisely that she could manipulate each finger independently.

With the frightful noise of a clash between heavy metal and divine bone, the fire thief's great form spun through the air. The inner walls were built to withstand the tremendous water pressure in the event of a flood, but he broke right through one like he was a wrecking ball on a crane.
If Waltraute had made a right swing instead of a left swing, he would have broken through the outer wall and the seawater would have come rushing in. Since the protective circle would only last 10 minutes, that would have cost Kyousuke and the others their lives.
There was no need to wait until he got back up.
Waltraute swung her cross spear horizontally to whip up destruction like a ferocious beast's claws through wet paper. But flames exploded from Prometheus's body once more and the pressure forcibly altered the cross spear's path.
The steel walls and doors swelled out unnaturally and orange sparks flew everywhere. The welds burst and the screws and bolts popped off and tore through the air like bullets.
A Material was not limited to a single form.
All the while, Kyousuke and Boy A were launching White Thorns with the ends of the Blood-Signs, but each time a wall broke down or a door burst off its hinges, the battlefield was widened from the cramped corridor. Those wounds looked like bites taken out of the metal, but even they changed the course of the ricocheting White Thorns and Petals. No real preparation was possible in this battle. They observed the real-time transformations of the battlefield while summoning more and more gods.
Kyousuke had a great white winged serpent from Aztec Mythology. Cost: 12. Sound Range: Low.
War Criminal had a demon of an unknown source that was later given the name Mephistopheles. Cost: 14. Sound Range: Middle.
(I'm behind in simple Cost and the rock-paper-scissors Sound Range…)
"You stepped on the landmine of recklessness, didn't you?"
Boy A sneered while spinning his devil stick.
Destruction blew through.
The thick pipes and walls were torn apart.
If Olivia had not used her extremely precise control to lower the great serpent's head to the floor, the horizontal swing of spread fingers would have sliced right through the Material. The great serpent aimed for the defenseless moment of motionlessness after the attack to sink its fangs into the demon's flank. Kyousuke watched that, but something seemed off to him.
The head of Illegal had made an appearance here. War Criminal would generally only work to fulfill his own plans.
And yet there was no hesitation in Boy A's destruction. Destroying the System Atlantis VFX production equipment along with the submarine's interior would be two birds with one stone for Kyousuke and Olivia, but War Criminal should have been protecting that system.

(…Don’t tell me…)
But something unexpected happened a moment later.
Even War Criminal had to have been surprised by this.
<…i…ma…>
Kyousuke’s soul was shaken by an impatience that felt like bluish-white electric sparks gradually frying the brain cells in the depths of his mind.
He was currently engaging Award 999, leader of Illegal, in battle.
He had no mental resources to spare for anything else, but his attention was forcibly dragged away like an invisible fishing hook had lodged itself in his soul.
<Ni…sa…>
Something scratchy rang like static in his brain itself rather than his eardrums.
It was a being similar to but very different from the White Queen.
Not many people could make Shiroyama Kyousuke feel so much danger.
In that case…
There was only one possibility.
(But she already killed-…)
<Nii-sama.>
He did not have time to brace himself.
They were more than 200m below the ocean surface, but that coordinate was meaningless.
A young child’s hand suddenly broke through the submarine’s thick outer wall.

Part 6

“Oh.”
There was a creaking sound.
With his ruler-like sunglasses hiding his eyes, Boy A, aka War Criminal, sensed the abnormality with his killer’s instincts.
“Owwwwwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!???”
Then it shattered.
With the high-pitched sound of a glass container dropped on the floor, the Artificial Sacred Ground was destroyed with no regard for the 10-minute limit.
Kyousuke’s soul was hit by an impact that felt like a hammer to the center of his chest.
“Uh…bh…?”
He doubled over.
The protective circle, the Material, and every other mystical element had been erased. Even War Criminal had lost his grip on all three of his devil sticks. It was not just Kyousuke. Everyone fighting in the Artificial Sacred Ground shared this pain.
He heard the screams of the girls who had regained their human form.
(Not…good…!!)
He clenched his teeth and steadied his breathing while desperately holding onto his consciousness and working his mind.
A childish and soft-looking hand reached in from the outer wall before him.
The hand dropped straight down. The nuclear submarine’s hull was built to withstand incredible water pressure, but the hand tore a straight line through it like it was pudding or yogurt.
<Nii-sama is there.>
“…!!!???”
Then a white torrent burst from the wound in the wall like a high-pressure water cutter. The protective circles could deflect anything, but they were gone now. Kyousuke immediately rolled to the side to avoid the blade that was full of sharp metal fragments like shark teeth.
But it was not over yet.
If the submarine filled with seawater, no one would survive.
<Wait, Nii-sama.>

Another hand reached in through the vertically-opened wound. The two arms widened the wound like someone forcing open a closing train or elevator door. Even a pinhole brought the threat of sinking, but with a disconcerting creaking and cracking, the hole was widened to the point that a child could walk right through.
Unexplored-class. Cost: 21. Sound Range: None.
The Colorless Little Girl Dedicated to a Single Goal (aie – a – oio – ei – ueo – ioa – e – uai – ee).
The symbol of the Fourth Summoning Ceremony which had ended the Third Summoning Ceremony.
“Dammit, you’re falling apart…”
“Onii-cha-…”
Wet Olivia tried to tell him not to worry about it, but Kyousuke cut her off.
“I created you. I embedded you in the world. And all so I could kill the White Queen myself!! You were supposed to be the savior of this hopeless world, so why did you have to break like that!?”
<…>
There was no response.
She had succeeded in executing the Queen. *And the fact that she succeeded without expecting to* had been such a powerful psychological shock that the little girl had broken and there was no communicating with her any longer.
Perhaps it was like she had tried punching her father, who used his authority to force all sorts of unfair family rules onto her, and ended up bringing him to tears. Except for her it was with a god no, an absolute being greater than a god.
She looked like a girl of about 10.
Her long wavy hair formed cat-like points on the sides of her head and she had a tail on the back of her hips that moved like an independent creature.
She wore something like a one-piece swimsuit, the countless blades and firearms surrounding her waist formed a dress-like silhouette, and the 12 thick books behind her were arranged in a circle that resembled a halo. She had no color to speak of, so the scene behind her showed through her smooth silhouette and a clione-like light flashed intermittently in the center of her chest.
Every one of her weapons was an ultimate divine item capable of killing the White Queen. They were not meant to be used on humans, but that assumption was meaningless now that she had gone berserk.
They were more than 200 meters below the ocean’s surface.
The Colorless Little Girl had entered from outside.
And yet *there was not a drop of seawater* on her clothes or her hair. She had deflected and reflected it all. No ordinary physical phenomena were allowed to touch her. She herself seemed to have become a sort of sacred ground.
“Why did you appear here…?”

Kyousuke voiced his anguish, but was he only confirming his own thoughts? Or was he letting out a problem he could not process himself?
“What are you using to travel between the two worlds, Colorless Little Girl!?”
Was there any logic to it?
Had someone made some largescale preparations to give freedom to the Colorless Little Girl just like the perpetual summoning of the White Queen? Or was there nothing like that?
Did logic simply no longer apply to this being who had broken after killing the greatest of evils?
(No. I can’t give up.)
He clenched his teeth and resisted the temptation.
He used all his strength to resist giving up on understanding her and holing up in a convenient shell.
(There has to be something… I created her and embedded her. No one knows the Colorless Little Girl better than I do. So if I give up on figuring her out, she really will become a disaster beyond reach…!!)
Most likely, no one could understand what the Colorless Little Girl was thinking as she muttered the same things as a doll abandoned in a ruined building.
Her swishing tail slowly rose, but was that a sign of interest in something? He could not read the emotions behind her actions.
Was this a positive or negative interest?
<Nii-sama, Nii-sama.>
“Tch!!”
The loud click of the tongue came from War Criminal instead of Kyousuke. He had seen motion from one of the weapons forming a long skirt silhouette: a simple speargun. The three-pronged harpoon on the end aimed directly at her target. Boy A was the leader of Illegal, placing him above every criminal organization in the world, but he was only a flesh-and-blood human when not inside an Artificial Sacred Ground.
The Colorless Little Girl did not even glance his way.
It was unclear whether she acted out of love or hate, but the trigger moved on its own all the same.
“…!!!???”
An explosive noise burst out.
It was the sound of the book girl, who was facing Olivia and who was soaked with sweat as she bore with the pain, striking the air with her dark-red swan wings. One of them weaved through the gaps in the broken inner walls and collided with short-haired Boy A. She left her own body exposed, but the cutting-edge Repliglass was simply not enough. With the sound of something being crushed, the three-pronged speargun broke through and tore off the one wing. It fell apart in midair and countless shards resembling glass or plastic scattered across the corridor.

(No. Did she intentionally place that in the attack's way to slightly divert its path…?)
"Olivia!!"
The rising seawater caught at Kyousuke's feet as he ran toward his vessel. That Kingdom F royal vessel could control Materials with great precision, but she was only a girl as soft as a kitten or chick without the blessing of an Incense Grenade.
He half dove over to grab at her torso and bring her to the floor. They both ended up in the seawater, but they did not have time to grimace at the unpleasant sensation. The broken ultimate weapon turned her head and the eyes peering out through the gaps in her bangs landed on that pair.
Kyousuke thought this was *a good sign.*
He could just barely see War Criminal out of the corner of his eye, but the Colorless Little Girl did not give him a chance to speak with him. Olivia threatened to slip from his grasp since her swimsuit had soaked up so much water, so he wrapped his arms around her slender body, picked her up, and passed through a nearby watertight door without looking aside.
Once he had shut the thick door and turned the round handle to seal it, pale-faced Olivia shouted from under his arm.
"What was that!? Wh-wh-what do we do, Onii-chan!?"
"We can relax as long as she's fixated on me. If I run away, War Criminal and the rest won't be killed instantly. Assuming Illegal doesn't poke the hornet's nest."
"You need to think up a way for *you* to survive first! Y-you're saying you're going to keep her on your tail while you leave the submarine, aren't you!?"
"More or less."
"B-but what about System Atlantis? If we don't destroy the computer on this submarine, we can't stop the video supporting the Silver Resource War. My Kingdom F could be labeled part of the East Europe Axis so they can make their overclocking doll. Are you just going to let that Unexplored-class destroy it?"
"I don't want to sacrifice any of the crew, so tearing the entire sub in two is not an option."
"You aren't saying we have to search through this maze of a submarine, are you?"
"About that…"
Loud footsteps sounded. They were in front of a sealed watertight door, so they were at a dead end. Crewmembers wielding shotguns appeared from around corners and stairways along the steel corridor.
They gave no warning before aiming the weapons at Kyousuke and Olivia. Were they Illegal soldiers who had not been given vessels?
Kyousuke pulled on Olivia's hand and ran inside a nearby cabin. Then he clicked his tongue. They were both soaked with seawater, so their wet footprints made it obvious where they were hidden.

A few gunshots rang out, the shot bounced around the corridor like pinballs, and then a young male voice gave a belated warning.
“Stop! Don’t leave that room! Stop, dammit!”
He had clearly forgotten his training and the commands were a mess. Sensing the impatience and fear in that, Kyousuke somewhat narrowed his eyes. It may have been naïve after being shot at so much, but he shouted back while holding Olivia under his arm.
“Stay away from the door if you don’t want to die! You’re up against an Unexplored-class, so she can slice through it like butter if she wants to!!”
He heard some gasps, but they did not shout back in anger or confusion.
A great cacophony of destruction followed. But not from the sealed door Kyousuke and Olivia had escaped through. It was a familiar noise. It was a scream from the submarine itself as the thick hull was torn like wet paper and high-pressure water poured in like a water cutter. And that directly hit the crew.
They had no hope of fighting back.
Instead, flat voices could be heard muttering.
“…”
“Oh…extraordinary…please…this…”
“…Sob. Oh, White Queen who guides us to victory in extraordinary battles, please reach out to this fragile human soul….uwehh…”
They had to be aware of the Queen’s death. And they had to know who had caused it.
So was clinging to that transcendent being the only way they could maintain any calm in their hearts?
An inescapable pressure bore down on them, just like a ritual preceding mass suicide.
“O-Onii-chan…”
“…”
Kyousuke carefully stuck his head out into the corridor to observe. The outer wall had been torn open in a few places and blade-like white torrents were bursting in. The crew lay collapsed on the ground after the masses of water struck them.
A small hand waved at him from the wall.
And then the hand pulled back.
Instead of breaking through the watertight door, she had used the hole in the hull to reenter the ocean and then created a new hole. The Colorless Little Girl had killed the White Queen, so the water pressure and lack of oxygen may have been meaningless to her.
While splashing through the thin film of water already covering the floor, Kyousuke carried Olivia through the corridor. The crewmembers lying face-up on the floor wore cellulose nanofiber bulletproof vests. That special material used plant fiber to provide strength five times greater than steel, but the center of each one was dented inwards by the ultra-high-pressure water.

“Uuh…”
They uttered scratchy groans.
They were still breathing, but not because they had been lucky. Good luck would never be enough when faced with the Colorless Little Girl who had executed the strongest of the strongest. A flesh-and-blood human could never escape an extraordinary Unexplored-class, so there had to be a reason behind this result.
The Colorless Little Girl was intentionally holding back.
Or rather, she was following Shiroyama Kyousuke’s methods.
“…Is she trying to save me? Is that what this is?”
He recalled how that small hand had waved as if saying hi before pulling back into the territory of death. This was an oddly broken sort of obedience very different from the White Queen’s high pressure love.
“O-Onii-chan, I don’t think we have time to stop and think.”
Olivia sounded worried as she twisted her own drenched body and wrapped her arms around herself to squeeze the water from her swimsuit like she was wringing out a rag.
Seawater continued to pour inside and the submarine would be unable to surface if this continued. Forcibly moving it while its balance was off would only cause it to roll over. Their only choice would be to wait inside the giant metal coffin until their oxygen ran out. He had to view the Colorless Little Girl as an out-of-control weapon that intended to provide covering fire but instead shot her ally in the back.
“Hey. Get up. Hey!”
“Ghh.”
“Prepare the filler and pumps. If the Colorless Little Girl destroys the hull any further, there will be no saving the sub. You need to seal the holes and pump out the water before that happens. Hurry!!”
“…Why do I have to listen to you…?”
“I’ll draw her away. I’ll remove her from the submarine entirely. How’s that for a bargaining chip?”
The crewmember fell silent.
Was he surprised or could he not rid himself of his doubt?
“There’s a lot I don’t know about the Colorless Little Girl’s behavior, but she should be fixated on me. I want to leave the submarine before the damage spreads any further. This sub is a San Francisco-class sold off by the US Navy, right? I saw on our approach that its combat functionality has been restored, but what about the direct undersea launch mass drivers?”
“…”
“The San Francisco-class was mass-produced and I know the basic layout and specs, so don’t try to lie to me. I want the giant railgun that can launch shells into orbit from depths up to 2000 meters. Using supercavitation, the shell can break the sound barrier even within the ocean’s high resistance. A San Francisco-class should have 16 vertical launch platforms on the submarine’s upper surface. It will be too late to drive us out once the

Colorless Little Girl breaks the sub in two. And a sub that doesn't exist on paper can't send out a distress signal. Even if some country notices the signal, they'll ignore it out of fear of being dragged into an international incident. Once this thing becomes a metal coffin, your odds of survival are nil. Everyone is watching, so try to make a mature decision."
"Th-…"
There was nothing he could do.
The young crewmember knew that, but he just about snapped back on reflex.
That was when the Colorless Little Girl's soft and squishy hand broke through the thick hull once more. Olivia screamed and Kyousuke pulled her close. A blast of ultra-high-pressure water shot out like a giant's sword and just barely missed the double blonde braid girl's face before slicing right through a thick pipe on the wall.
Had it been the hostility and resistance to Shiroyama Kyousuke?
If that was all it took for the Colorless Little Girl to act, then this really was the worst. The trigger was far too loose.
The pale-faced crewmember trembled on the floor and raised both hands.
"Okay, okay! I'll do what you say. Just get that monster out of here!!"
"The mass driver."
"The diagram supplied to us by Toy Dream is not reliable! We only know what information we've seen for ourselves. Of the 16 platforms, only 8 have been revived. They take up space, so if all of them were revived, they wouldn't have had enough space for new equipment!!"
"Ah," said Olivia wildly. "That's right, Onii-chan. System Atlantis is on this submarine, isn't it? What do we do about that?"
"…"
"I'll talk!!" shrilly replied the crewmember. "System Atlantis is not on this submarine. This is just another relay station."
"Eh?"
"It's only connected to a distant antenna buoy by fiber optic cable. That's what makes contact with System Atlantis. It's on a space station in orbit!!"
Olivia looked shocked, but Kyousuke looked like he had found the answer he had been looking for. He had been wondering why War Criminal had not seemed to care if the submarine was destroyed from within despite supposedly being here to protect it. He would never have done that if it contained equipment he could not afford to have destroyed. He would also have been more worried about damage to the equipment than the oxygen supply when the flooding began.
"A cruise ship, the deep sea…and now outer space…???" asked Olivia.
"But why wouldn't they use the Missing Princess's antenna tower to directly communicate with the satellite? Oh, I get it."
"Space looks like it's out of anyone's reach, but it doesn't actually provide that much of an advantage," explained the crewmember. "A single ballistic missile fired from a silo could shoot it down and civilian companies are

beginning to reach space these days. So they hid that System Atlantis was on the space station…on Toy Dream OP-01 and then placed the communication equipment on a submarine to erase it from the globe. Space and the deep sea. You can't find those locations on a search engine's satellite map. It was a form of double camouflage."
"That's perfect then. Let's use the direct undersea launch mass driver to leave the submarine and make our way to Toy Dream OP-01."
"Wait."
"You still want to follow the rules? Well, I won't stop you if you'd rather share this metal coffin with us."
They had a plan.
Kyousuke grabbed a dropped shotgun from the wet floor and the young crewmember's shoulders jumped. But Kyousuke only removed the shells and pressed the empty gun against the crewmember's chest.
Seeing Kyousuke wink and raise his hands, Olivia raised her hands too.
"You can take the credit."
"…"
"You're free to draw your loaded sidearm if you want, but not even I can predict what the broken Colorless Little Girl will do. You saw how frightening seawater is just now, didn't you? If you provoke her and her attack moves past the point of no return, you are responsible for the death of the 100 or more crewmembers."
With that, Kyousuke and Olivia walked boldly through the submarine while being held up. The other crewmembers gave them curious looks but then raced past while carrying filler materials like thick rubber mats and steel beams. Needless to say, the young crewmember was holding a shotgun behind them, so it looked like they were being led away after been captured.
"Uuh."
"Olivia, don't lower your hands. You've been fidgeting your butt around a lot, but what are you doing?"
"It feels gross, Onii-chan. You wouldn't understand since you've never worn a wet Japanese school swimsuit after it cools down. I-it's clinging to me…"
If he needed to do that to understand, then he never would understand.
The direct undersea launch mass drivers had originally been a crucial component of the nuclear submarine as a strategic weapon, but their importance had dropped now that it had been modified into a communication ship. The equipment remained, but there was no reason to ever use it. Thus, the loading room for one of the vertical electromagnetic tubes was not even guarded.
Once inside the empty steel room, Kyousuke lowered his hands.
"The San Francisco-classes had multipurpose platforms. That means they can launch more than just normal explosives or ABC weapons. They can also launch containers loaded with supplies or actual troops. So we can have it carry us just fine."

“Sigh. Is there a towel or something anywhere? I just…I just want to dry off!”
There were some rags, but they were all covered in machine oil.
Meanwhile, the crewmember who had guided them here spoke up nervously.
“You can do that if you want, but how are you going to fire it? Surely you aren’t going to have me take control of the strictly-guarded combat command all on my own.”
“I don’t need that much from you. I said it’s a multipurpose platform, didn’t I? Since they allegedly have peaceful uses, the San Francisco-class’s trigger is much lighter than most. It won’t be like a war movie where you have to read off a one-time-use launch code and then turn two keys at once.”
“Are you serious…?”
“Now do you understand what kind of place you’ve been working in? That’s the real reason a military reduction treaty was used to force these into early decommission. Bring over the explosion-resistant briefcase in the glass case on the wall. That’s the repair kit for reconnecting the severed wiring.”
“Wait, wait. What kind of magic are you going to use now?”
“After reattaching the wiring, there’s a special sequence you can do to reset the entire ship’s system. Then a single command from the briefcase’s test laptop can bypass combat command and fire the mass driver.”
The young crewmember blinked several times.
It seemed to take him a moment to grasp what Kyousuke had just said.
“I-isn’t this a multipurpose platform that can carry strategic weapons into orbit…?”
“Now do you see why Russia was so mad? Okay, let’s get started.”

Part 7

A giant javelin shot from one of the vertical electromagnetic tubes lining the submarine’s upper surface.

Part 8

Unbelievable pressure pushed down on the two of them.
It had been launched from within the ocean, but the 10m mass of metal easily moved well past the speed of sound on its way to the surface. Water generally had far greater resistance than air, but when using a special condition such as supercavitation, the water resistance could be drastically reduced, making supersonic movement quite possible.
After breaching the surface, the supercavitation cup separated from the tip of the shell. The shell below was designed to handle air resistance, so it maintained its momentum as it blasted through the white clouds.
Yes, unlike a normal rocket, there were no used-up boosters that separated from the bottom one at a time. With a mass driver, the initial velocity was everything and there was no additional acceleration. Instead, it reduced the frictional loss as much as possible by detaching different cups designed to match the ocean, the air at low altitude, and the air at high altitude.
When used as a weapon, the shell would be loaded with a cartridge carrying any number of explosives or an ABC weapon. Or it could fill itself with seawater to increase its weight and drop onto its target from ballistic flight to cheaply produce a mass weapon that rivalled a meteor or asteroid strike.
“Nheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!!”
“Olivia, bear with it. It won’t even take five minutes to arrive.”
However.
A creaking sound rang in his eardrums.
Something was growing from the seam of the thick airlock. It was a swan wing dyed the red of oxygenated blood. Kyousuke held Olivia’s small body and clicked his tongue as the dark color dropped straight down. With solid flashes, more and more deadbolts were sliced through and then the thick door itself was thrown out into the empty air.
The person on the other side came as no surprise.
“War Criminal…!!”
“Come out and playyyyyyyy!! Kyousuke-chaaa

been burned away by the air’s friction. The Repliglass wing must have used subtle movements to fully control the fluid motion so it was diverted away. Even so, the stench of scorched hair reached Kyousuke’s nose.
Meanwhile, Kyousuke and Olivia were doomed because they had lost the thick airlock meant to protect them. At this rate, they would be fried by the friction, especially when they entered thermosphere located higher even than the ionosphere. And even if they did survive that, only the vacuum of space awaited them.
They had no future like this.
What was the key to escaping this situation?
“…”
A dull sound rang out.
It was the sound of Kyousuke dropping an Incense Grenade (sans pin) from his hand. If he set up an Artificial Sacred Ground, the summoner could escape any form of death with the protective circle and the vessel could do the same with the tough body of the Material.
And thanks to the Colorless Little Girl’s interference, they had never finished their battle.
As the tremendous pressure bore down on him, Kyousuke drew the Blood-Sign from his back and spoke quietly.
“Let’s settle this already, you piece of shit.”
A moment later, the intense friction caused everything around them to glow orange.

Between the Lines 2

“Oh.”
Aika’s back dropped straight down in her Toy Dream 35 luxury apartment. The 5m white liger she used as a sofa had sensed a visitor before the doorbell even rang, so she flattened her ears and shrank down in fear. That gave Aika a pretty good guess as to who it was. It was daytime, but it was still too early for a package from an online store.
“Feels good to be back at my second home.”
“…It’s the stock prices hag monster…”
“I brought some almond jelly from a favorite restaurant of mine, but would you prefer I ate it all myself.”
Aika’s mood took a 180 as she raised her hands and cheered.
Lu Niang Lan, the modified China dress beauty, crossed the living room like she owned the place and made her way to the kitchen space. She was not Aika’s girlfriend and yet she knew where things were stored in the kitchen better than Aika since the girl could not cook.
“Hurry, hurry.”
“Hold on, hold on. This dessert isn’t going to taste very good on an empty stomach, is it? These things are best after a meal. I made sure to keep some rice stocked in your freezer, so just reheat that on the stove and…would some quick fried rice be best for midday? I don’t feel like washing all the dishes it would take for a soup or ankake.”
“…Yay! I want crab fried rice.”
“You don’t have anything that nice in your fridge. You’d get mad if I used the fish paste imitation stuff, right? But let’s see…if you want seafood, and shellfish in particular…oh, I just found some convenience store sakura shrimp snacks. Were these for a late night snack? Anyway, I’ll use those as the main ingredient. If I add some onion, green onion, garlic, shiitake, and a beaten egg, it should be good enough.”
“Isn’t that a lot of veggies? There were two different kinds of onion…”
“Heating the shrimp causes a variety of things to seep out of the shell. Its flavor would be overpowering, so you need this much to get the overall flavor and texture right.”
After putting an apron on over her modified China dress, Lu Niang Lan began cooking. She was a quick and precise cook. She avoided any unnecessary adlibbing and shook the heated wok while providing the exact right temperature and amounts with the precision of a clockwork doll.

…Aproned Lu Niang Lan had both her hands full and her back to a wild animal while giving off a mouthwatering aroma, but the 5m white liger only shrank down even further. The modified China dress beauty was only humming and fixing some lunch, but the liger's animal instincts told her something. It was not that Lu Niang Lan did not have her guard down. She was dangerous even when she had her guard down. Trying to play with her from behind right now would probably only get the liger's jaw broken by her heel. The strike would be even harder than a racehorse's hind leg.
Lu Niang Lan herself was completely relaxed as she carried a tray back into the living room. The fried rice was piled up into a dome shape and one of the main sakura shrimps was placed on top. The tray also carried some jasmine tea and the almond jelly dessert. The modified China dress beauty supported the bottom of the tray with her five fingers and she lined the dishes up on the dining room table by bending her slender back. Each and every movement was graceful. The assassin's habit of using her allure to create openings in a target had permeated her to the bone.
"Here you go."
"…Hm? Doesn't this smell a lot like garlic?"
"That would be because I used the flavored sakura shrimps you bought at the convenience store. These were left over from the ones you bought to fill your stomach while browsing the internet late at night. But, look, I made the jasmine tea on the stronger side to counteract it."
"…If you say so. Anyway, what happened with your money?"
"So you're actually interested in that?" The modified China dress beauty breathed an exasperated sigh while reaching behind her to undo the apron.
"I've decided on a new strategy. If I try to protect my old financial foundation, I can't stop the money from slipping from my fingers. Right now, the real money is in war! I'm going to start doing business with a focus on the Silver Resource War. I'm setting my sights on a dizzying world where I make deals involving chunks of pure gold as large as pieces of dry hardtack!!"
"…Isn't Onii-chan involved in that? And you think you have any chance of predicting what's going to happen…?"
Unlike a cooking show, Aika did not provide a lengthy description of the fried rice as she ate it.
But no matter how thankless Aika was, Lu Niang Lan knew she had won when the striped bikini girl's spoon would not stop moving.

“Neh heh hehhhh☆”
“…What’s that for? And please stop poking my thighs with your toes below the table.”
“My, my. Your defenses are so much weaker than Kyousuke-chan’s.”
Lu Niang Lan moved her feet with enough finesse to test if she could untie the bows on either side of the girl’s striped bikini bottom.
“But if Kyousuke-chan is involved, then I can be pretty sure the war will be a dud in some way or another. And there are ways to use a bubble you know is going to burst. You work up people’s fear more and more and more and then you sell and sell and sell just before it bursts.”
The false idea that Halley’s Comet’s tail would rob the earth of its oxygen had once been widespread, so common “air” had massively increased in value and even the rubber tubes for bicycles had flown off the shelves. How many contracts could she get signed before the earth’s population recovered from this panic? That was what Lu Niang Lan was talking about. If she took a worthless wasteland at the ends of the earth and called it a final shelter, it would sell for the asking price. Once the dust had settled and peace had returned, they would be puzzled why their room was filled with boxes of hardtack or they would feel silly for beginning to construct a useless cold sleep facility, but that was none of her concern.
Striped Bikini Aika must have built up a resistance to that kind of fear-driven business from the infomercials that played after late-night anime because she only sighed in exasperation.
“I’ve received word that Illegal has been seen hanging around the ship creating the videos to support the Silver Resource War. Are you sure you want it to be a dud?”
“We’re from different sections.” The modified China dress beauty sounded cheerful as she showed off the unfair ability to maintain her elegance while chowing down on her food. “Illegal is a collection of groups with conflicting interests: gangs, yakuza, cartels, churches, mafias, secret cabals, and even satanists and witch covens. We sometimes work together when our interests align, but no one wants a vertical hierarchy with a pyramid structure. We focus more on old-fashioned ironclad rules and bonds of blood than on modern law, but those only apply to the ‘sisters and brothers’ within a single group.”
“Meaning?”
“It’s none of my concern who from Illegal is there, unless it’s someone I know and like. Even if the leader is toppled, the overall framework of Illegal won’t go away. If that was all it took to take us out, we wouldn’t have been Government’s nemesis for so long when you’re working so hard to wipe us out. It doesn’t matter what individuals or groups are crushed. It’s like a beehive. We can seal up the cells that aren’t usable anymore. We just have to keep hatching the eggs faster than that. …Oh, and Illegal doesn’t have a queen bee. In every age, the petty bourgeois who are unfairly rejected by justice will blossom as a great evil.”

Lu Niang Lan gave a bewitching laugh.
Yes, that modified China dress beauty was one of Illegal's elites, but she had once been the vessel closer than anyone else to the top of Government.
But she felt no particular debt of gratitude to the major power that had accepted her afterwards.
The wicked woman was simply a wicked woman.
She would play the role that Illegal wished of her.
"In fact, our current leader…War Criminal, was it? I don't like him much. I could sleep muuuuuch more soundly if Kyousuke-chan would just take him out, but he never seems to go quite far enough. No, *perhaps he refuses to allow that action even if it is only meant as a smokescreen.*"
"…I'm glad I don't have to mess with all that…"
"I've experienced both and I'd say Government is just as bad."
That was when a light electronic beep sounded.
It came from a character smartphone sitting on the living room table.
"Oh? Checking the internet now? Doing that at the table is rude, you know?"
"…I don't want to hear that from the woman whose toes are trying to mess with my bikini strings…"
"The press and social media just won't shut up about the coming war. Whether they're at school or the office, everyone is focused on the Blue Film supporting the war. The traffic is so concentrated that I would avoid making an online payment or downloading a video right now. You wouldn't want an intermittent signal for that."
"…Take the internet from a shut-in and what will she have left? Don't worry. I've altered the packets so my signal wouldn't be dropped even if a kaiju stomped out of the ocean…"
"I see. Are you using the scramble system for emergency services? How Government of you."
With the fried rice spoon held in her mouth, the striped bikini girl grabbed the character smartphone and operated it with her fingertips.
She accessed the special Assort Message that let you insert a Toy Dream fairy tale character into your messages.
But the simple and unadorned message she had received ignored 99% of that functionality:
I do not know who this is, but you do not seem to be a member of the family. The only other people who would know this address are the high-level maintenance and inspection staff.
That does not leave many suspects.
I am currently running through the list, including those who have retired. The amount of time it takes for you to name yourself will be taken into consideration when determining how lenient to be with you. And of course, if I discover you first, there will be no lenience.
I once visited the Guantanamo detention camp in the hopes of finding some material, but there was no making a fairy tale out of that.

-Michelange Toydream
The swimsuit girl breathed a soft sigh.
This message was in response to the Assort Message she had sent before. It had not been an anonymous message and she had used the name Aika Toydream, but *as expected*, that had not been enough.
Even when she included an illustration of the World's Happiest Girl.
Even when he had to have seen that character he had poured so much love into designing.
She had known this would happen.
When she posted her thoughts about a late-night anime or video game on a message board or social media, she would receive no response whatsoever. Summoners and vessels who had earned a certain number of Awards would vanish from normal people's minds unless they were directly in their line of sight. Thus, anything done over the internet would be ignored like they were "someone worthless".
That was not a huge deal on a message board anyone could post on, but if that "someone" appeared on a home network where outsiders had been eliminated like germs in a sterilized room, it would be found suspicious. That could not just be ignored.
But that did not matter here.
Aika somewhat narrowed her eyes, wiggled the handle of the spoon sticking out of her mouth, and finally wrote a reply:
I have already provided my name, but I doubt you will understand that. Nor does it matter at the moment.
You have gone too far.
Pull out of the Silver Resource War right this instant.
This is beyond the point to even be thinking about leniency.
She could send these Assort Messages all day and he would never take her words seriously. There would be no sudden miracle for the girl who had vanished from 7 billion people's memories thanks to the heartless rules. And Aika was not hoping for that. She was merely scattering bait. She had intended to continue sending messages until he bit, but the reaction was swift.
Several soft electronic beeps sounded.
(High-level maintenance and inspection staff. In that case…)
"Hieroglyph, hm?"
"Nweh? Are you talking about security?"
She was receiving popups warning her of an attack attempting to trace the signal of her message. It was being stopped just before reaching her and Aika had used the computer to analyze the attack method to learn what she could about this opponent.
This was only the Toydream family's home network, but the family's discussions were a greater crucible for important ideas and business decisions than the mainframe in the US headquarters. It used more than a

normal ISP contract or personal proxy server. A data management company had to be defending it as their top priority.
That same company was well-known for its unique encryption technology. The encryption's strength may have been even greater than the official mobile device of a country's president, but Aika had a few tricks up her sleeve.
First, she was a member of the Toydream family.
And second, she had the authority of Government, the world police who crossed national borders.
(Hieroglyph is a high-level data security company that specializes in government and corporate contracts. Oh, there it is. They're already registered as one of Government's subordinate organizations. Now, then. I've extracted the text report, so let's get this done real quick.)
She could strip the Toydream family's home network bare by attacking Hieroglyph, but Aika was not the kind of skilled hacker seen in movies. And she did not need to be to break through that high level data security company's firewall.
She now reached for a notebook-sized tablet filled with thousands, if not tens of thousands, of addresses.
She only had to send a businesslike email somewhere else:
A request from Award 870, Hikikomori.
Top Priority.
The local network containing my list of secret operations as an intermediary is under cyber-attack. I am just barely stopping it, but I cannot guarantee how long that will last since the attack is by a group with specialized skills. In the worst case, there could be a leak of names, addresses, and other dangerous information on summoners, vessels, and clients who support Government. If word gets out who ordered and who carried out which operations, they could be exposed to retaliatory attacks.
Respond to this threat immediately.
I believe the target is the high-level data security company Hieroglyph. This is an organized attack from within Government, but keep in mind the possibility of internal conflict within Government or a connection to another group like Illegal.
Please use the attached report to determine the specific target.
"…Okay."
The one-sided attack from Hieroglyph was real. An expert would be able to see that when they read the alphanumeric report she had extracted as text data. From there, Government's elites would use a thorough cyber-attack to strip Hieroglyph bare.
Hieroglyph was a first-class company that protected the US government and major corporations, but they were only a subordinate organization for Government as a whole. If the true elites got off their butts, the end result could not be more obvious.
She received word only four minutes later:

Operation complete. We will provide the master key to the target company's entire intranet. Please use the designated method to perform a search for stolen data. Any names and other text data you input will not be saved in any form, so do not worry.

That completed the first phase.

America's plans and Illegal's plotting did not matter. She only wanted to know how President Toydream had become twisted into supporting the Silver Resource War.

And that piece of information awaited the girl inside that home network.

"Time to start the second phase…"

Facts

- War Criminal was the neighbor found standing next to everyone, the common everyday Boy A. He is the polar opposite of Elvast who reigned as king of Government.
- Enemy and ally can both summon the same Regulation-class, but that is not necessarily true for the Divine-class and above.
- In the world of the Summoning Ceremony, the actual strength of the gods is less important than how much of that strength can be drawn out based on the Cost and Sound Range. Thus, you are not guaranteed to win if you summon the head god of a mythology or religion.
- War Criminal plans to strengthen the White Queen by more efficiently drawing out her power through an artificial vessel. This is based on the technical information leaked from Pandemonium.
- The Colorless Little Girl directly destroyed the Artificial Sacred Ground and forcibly interrupted a summoner battle. That suggests that a summoner who uses the Third Summoning Ceremony would be unable to complete a battle with and defeat her.
- System Atlantis was not on the submarine either. Based on War Criminal’s behavior and the testimony of a crewmember, it was revealed to be on the Toy Dream OP-01 space station.
- The Colorless Little Girl has grown attached to Shiroyama Kyousuke. It is impossible for him to control her, but she shows signs of trying to protect him in her own way. She is obedient, which differs from how the White Queen forces her love onto him. However, she has gone berserk and his safety is not guaranteed. The risk is so great that not even Kyousuke can predict her actions.

Stage 03: Extraterrestrial Battle Against Intelligent Life

“W-wow… Is she obeying your commands…?”
“No.”
(Stage 03 Open 08/04 12:05 “UTC+09 Tokyo time”)
Extraterrestrial Battle Against Intelligent Life

Part 1

After being fired from the submarine’s vertical electromagnetic tube, the mass driver shell had finally left the scorching atmosphere.
It arrived in a pitch-black world with an unobstructed starry sky.
Down below was a blue scene one would never see in life on the surface. It was strange for the sky to be located below you, but both Kyousuke and Boy A did not seem to care.
Blood-Signs flashed and the sharply-launched White Thorns knocked away several red Petals.
Yes, inside that vacuum, they had planted their feet on the side of a cylinder measuring more than 10 meters tall and they were holding a deadly Summoning Ceremony battle.
The Illegal leader with eyes hidden by ruler-like sunglasses was laughing so hard he could barely breathe.
“Ee hee hah!! God, we’re scary! Humans are just scary as hell!! I made the surprise attack this time, but you can still keep up with me, Kyousuke-chan!?”
“…”
Kyousuke had dropped an Incense Grenade on the shell’s floor when the door had burst open. That meant the Artificial Sacred Ground had used the floor as its base surface, not the outer side.
So what had happened?
Needless to say, a new surface would not be established unless the old one had been destroyed. The repeated clashes were causing the shell itself to fall apart as it flew along its ballistic course.
Their Materials had already passed the Divine-class and reached the Unexplored-class.
For Olivia: Unexplored-class. Cost: 17. Sound Range: High.
The Liquefying Predator who Covers All With Rainbow Colors (hb – e – wuz – vc – a – weq – ei – lvz).
A translucent liquid that glittered like the surface of a CD formed a beautiful woman with the perfectly balanced proportions of a Greek sculpture. She swung her long ponytail side to side and she was actually a predator composed entirely out of digestive fluids.
For the red fallen angel: Unexplored-class. Cost: 18. Sound Range: Low.
The Bizarre Gray Mollusk Who Swims the Starry Ocean (en – a – hf – ei – ja – o – cd – to – jok).

She looked like an immodestly nude girl, but from the waist down, she was made up of giant octopus legs that had a dull leaden shine. Those tentacles would extend, constrict, crush, and pull the target into her body. Those countless sucker-covered legs robbed her prey of all freedom and carried them to the deadly chewing at her center.
…At first glance, it looked like War Criminal had the advantage in both Cost and Sound Range, but a closer look at the situation changed that view. Short-haired Boy A liked to use Materials closely connected to sin and betrayal, but Shiroyama Kyousuke had driven the top of Illegal to the point that he could no longer play around like that.
The two Unexplored-classes repeatedly clashed on the side of the thick cylinder.
The beautiful woman made of translucent slime extended her arms and sacrificed her own volume to fire an ultra-high-pressure beam. The mollusk girl wriggled her countless legs to move along a seemingly impossible path that dodged the beam and went in for a cross-counter, but the slime woman was no longer there. She had launched all of her volume as a beam and that beam coiled around to form the feminine silhouette on the other side. That allowed her to move around with something similar to a wire shot.
Kyousuke was aware of something while he viewed the battlefield and prepared a White Thorn at the tip of his Blood-Sign.
Their footing was poor.
This was taking too long.
When the octopus legs missed their mark, they would tear into the mass driver shell, sending countless cracks running through it. Fire-and-forget mass driver shells were sturdier than rockets for which fuel composed the majority of their mass, but that only went so far. The cylinder fell apart in no time and their base surface was lost.
It was hard to tell with the Artificial Sacred Ground in effect, but they were in the weightlessness of outer space.
With no ground or air, there was no friction. And thus there were no brakes. The countless fragments maintained their momentum and scattered out like a shotgun blast. Kyousuke hopped onto one fragment like it was a surfboard to establish a new Artificial Sacred Ground, but…
<Wh-wh-wh-wh-what are we going to do, Onii-chan!? If we fly off toward the ends of the universe, we can never get back! Plus, the protective circle only lasts 10 minutes!!>
“Not a problem.”
It was just as Kyousuke replied without batting an eye that he saw it.
He saw a special structure with several supporting pillars sticking perpendicularly out from a giant central pillar. And those supporting pillars had several thin panels sticking perpendicularly into them. Those were solar panels. The overall silhouette resembled the letter H, but the many branches and leaves connected together at right angles to form square frames of varying sizes made it also look like a fish pond.

Needless to say, this was their destination: Toy Dream OP-01 space station.
<We're going to hit it, Onii-chan!?>
"That's exactly what we want to do."
At what Mach speed were Kyousuke and Boy A travelling in that moment?
Then the scatter shot slammed into the space station.
The many solar panels shattered as Kyousuke and the others broke into the station's central pillar.
The protective circle was still providing its wonderful effects.
After breaking through the station's outer wall, climbing inside, and resetting the base surface as the floor inside, Kyousuke did not have a scratch on him.
And that was the limit.
The 10 minute timer had expired.
Particles of light burst as the Artificial Sacred Ground and protective circle scattered. The summoner could stand on the walls or the ceiling while they fought, but that effect vanished and Kyousuke's bangs floated up. He was surrounded by the strange sensation of weightlessness.
Olivia returned to being a small girl and spun around in the air.
"Awa, awa, awa, awa!! A-air! Oxygen!!"
"Olivia, the cup attached that tube is a zero-g toilet for the astronauts."
"Eh? This is a toilet? Uuh…it's coming back now that I can relax…"
"?"
After protecting the princess's first kiss at the last second, Kyousuke looked to the large hole they had broken through. The space station contained pressurized artificial air, which included the necessary oxygen, so breaking through the outer wall should have caused everything to be sucked out as if by a giant vacuum cleaner like in the movies, but that did not happen.
Something like thick plastic had covered the hole. The inner wall's wallpaper was made to tear away, so if that "cinematic vacuum cleaner effect" did occur, it would automatically cover the hole like a bunch of fallen leaves clogging up a drain.
(I guess everyone does it the same way. I have heard that every country's spaceships and space stations end up the same because there's no room for unnecessary decorations in space development… In that case, I shouldn't have trouble searching the place without knowing the layout.)
They had started with only 10 minutes to work with.
And they had made a hole-in-one on the Toy Dream OP-01 space station. He had done it by keeping the battle going and intentionally not letting the battle end before they arrived. That had been the only way Kyousuke could think of to keep not just him and Olivia alive, but War Criminal and his vessel as well.
"Now, then."
"!?"
Whether it was meant to increase her suggestiveness or her embarrassment, the enemy vessel wore a pure white bunny suit with a

tailcoat-like vest. She also had just the one dark-red swan wing. Despite her apparel, she was a book girl with almost no sense of presence. Currently, she was sitting on the station floor, holding the summoner's head to her surprisingly large chest, and glaring at Kyousuke and Olivia.
Yes.
The Boy A in the ruler-like sunglasses had passed out in his vessel's arms.
"Not too surprising. You two were exposed to all that water pressure and air friction before you gained the protective circle from the Summoning Ceremony. You seem to have diverted as much of the fluid as you could with that wing, but you couldn't reduce it to zero. To be honest, it's a mystery how you survived at all. He needs treatment ASAP."
"Don't…touch him!!"
The obedient-looking girl with her wavy reddish-chestnut hair tied back in two bunches desperately shook her head while holding the summoner even tighter.
The bunny ears did not come off even when she was moving so violently in zero-g, so they must have been attached in some special fashion. ….Or were the ears part of the modifications to her body?
Did she speak so intermittently due to spending so long only speaking with a single person?
"I won't let…anyone touch him. I know how to do it. I don't need your help. I won't let you…do anything!!"
After having her say, the vessel girl pulled a vial from the chest of her white outfit. It was smaller than one for eye drops.
Was it meant to wake him up in emergencies?
A clear liquid danced within.
"…Don't worry. I'll take away the pain…"
She removed the cap, struggled to get the drug out in zero-g since it balled up like a pearl inside, and finally got it into her mouth.
With a glance toward Kyousuke and Olivia, she seemed to shake something from her mind, touched Boy A's cheeks to adjust the position of his jaw, shut her eyes, and placed her lips on his.
"Ohh."
"Olivia."

Kyousuke spoke her name, but then a question occurred to him.
Don’t worry. I’ll take away the pain.
If that drug was meant to wake him up, it would do quite the opposite. That would only bring the pain back.
Then what had those words meant?
Or rather, what was that drug in the vial?
A moment later, a strangely dark red drop of liquid escaped from between their lips.
“Dammit!!” shouted Kyousuke as he grabbed his Blood-Sign again and pressed his back against the wall.
Needless to say, this was to negate the recoil in the zero-g environment. He was trying throw the tip of Blood-Sign sharply toward the vessel girl like a spear, but…
“Onii-chan!?”
A dull sound rang out.
While the book girl closed her eyes and sent every last drop of the drug down the summoner’s throat, the dark-red wing on her back knocked Kyousuke’s Blood-Sign from the air.
With her bodily modifications, she had the advantage in a normal battle that did not use the Summoning Ceremony. And the zero-g environment did not allow for standard martial arts that produced force from the movement of body weight. Here, the girl could produce deadly force with a single swing of that solid wing.
With her eyes closed, the girl extended her slender arms and held out the dark-red wing toward Kyousuke and Olivia as a warning. Was this really according to Boy A’s wishes? She restrained his wrists as they wriggled like independent serpents.
The pulse of life was gradually fading.
After savoring the final convulsion, the fallen angel finally removed her soft lips from someone as motionless as a cicada shell. She held her shoulders, a tremor ran down her spine, and she basked in some kind of guilty feeling.
Illegal’s leader twirled through empty air and crashed back-first into the wall, but there was no weight to him.
That short-haired Boy A had said she was his childhood friend.
The girl looked like someone else entirely as she twisted her lips into a smile that glistened red with his blood.
“…You’re kidding…right? Why…?”
Olivia was pale and dumbfounded and the alluring girl carrying the scent of death replied in an oddly flat voice while her surprisingly large breasts rose and fell.
“Do I need a reason…? Is seeing what he did to me…not enough?”
“…”
“Your summoner called it the eye of the storm, didn’t he? He was right. I have been waiting for so long to be saved from that safest location. If I

didn’t do it now, I might not have had another chance. I can finally leave the cabin and descend from the stormy mountain.”
She had once been his childhood friend.
But perhaps that was exactly why.
Kyousuke had seen love transformed into hatred before. That would create a hatred much deeper and heavier than from someone who had hated you from the beginning.
“What are you going to do now?”
“Follow the precedent.”
The vessel responded with a distant, emotionless voice while her large breasts floated in the weightlessness.
Had she already thought about what to do? Was that all she had been thinking about for a long, long time?
“Criminal organizations are a retaliatory society, but I will leave that society. Lu Niang Lan was warmly welcomed by Illegal because she killed the king of Government, so I just have to take his head to some other group. I’ve thought this through. I’ll be fine. Yes, I’ll be fine…”
“…”
It sounded like she had thought about it, but she had not.
Kyousuke breathed a heavy sigh as he pictured the outlines of her thoughts.
…She was just like the War Criminal Boy A who she had hated more than anyone. She may have thought she had outwitted him, but this left tragedy for both of them. It felt like looking into the past of the world’s worst serial killers and finding that they too had been abused when they were young.
Shiroyama Kyousuke thought about what had happened here.
Olivia must not have liked the weightlessness because she clung to his hoodie like it was a lifeline.
“O-Onii-chan. What do we do with her…?”
Even if she had that red-dyed swan wing, they could settle things with her in an instant by throwing an Incense Grenade. She was only a vessel, so she could not summon a Material.
But Kyousuke shook his head.
He had already used two on the way here. His supply was running low.
And more importantly…
“The damage has to have spread to several parts of the space station. The automated repairs are only treating the symptoms, so they only buy some time. Leaving her here would only doom her to float through space when the station falls apart. …We’ll take her with us.”
The girl in a pure white bunny suit slowly tilted her head.
She had been left behind by the proper flow of time, so she may not have cared one way or the other. She wanted to live and she wanted to survive, but she did not seem to have considered what it was she wanted to do with her life.
“…”

That poison girl showed no sign of resisting or attacking as she let her body go oddly limp and simply let her hair and breasts float in the zero-g environment. She, Kyousuke, and Olivia viewed the space station once more. She must have no longer cared about the simple tote bag or its contents. The Incense Grenades that looked like fat-ended clubs were simply floating free in the weightlessness.
Olivia pushed her head in between Kyousuke and the poison girl to push them apart and use her own body as some kind of shield.
“No one showed up even after all this noise, Onii-chan.”
“And I haven’t heard a single alarm even though the airtight wall was breached and the artificial air leaked out. The station is probably unmanned at the moment.”
“Ehh? But aren’t space stations expensive? Wouldn’t they have some kind of manager here?”
“They can have work robots handle the maintenance and inspections these days.”
Although since it was filled with artificial air and contained an astronaut toilet, they must have maintained a habitable environment at all times.
They had come here to destroy Toy Dream’s System Atlantis VFX production machine in order to prevent the Blue Film from pushing public opinion toward accepting the war. Each episode was 10 minutes for less than an hour in all. They had to stop the distribution of those videos or else that short runtime would change history.
They made their way down a corridor not so much by walking on the floor as by pushing on the wall to propel themselves backwards through the air.
A space station might sound like a highly unusual setting, but it actually looked a lot like a long school hallway. There were doors at even intervals which connected to the support pillars that stabbed perpendicularly into the main pillar.
Olivia must have felt relieved to find herself in a properly sealed area because she was finally calm enough to look around in zero-g fascination. She gave a curious look to her double braids as they floated around like separate creatures.
“Huh? There’s something moving inside my swimsuit. …Nhee, w-wait, Onii-chan, you aren’t touching me, are you!?”
“Why would I do that?”
“Th-then what is this!? Did a bug get inside!? Is a mysterious alien creature trying to take over my body!?”
“I seriously doubt it. There’s artificial air here, so that might be the air bubbles moving between your skin and the swimsuit.”
“I-id tiggles…”
Olivia twisted around while trying to endure the sensation, but then she saw something like a clear jewel pass right by Kyousuke’s exasperated face.
A liquid was floating through the zero-g space.
“!? P-poison!!”

She tensed up after recalling how the summoner had coughed up blood and convulsed. At the same time, several similar jewels spread out.
Kyousuke used up some precious oxygen to sigh.
“It’s just seawater. Olivia, have you forgotten how wet you are?”
Kyousuke had pulled the book girl along by her hand, but she was simply floating upside-down like a helium balloon. She did not respond in any form to Olivia’s unwarranted suspicion or to the drops of water hitting her cheek.
It was Olivia whose eyes widened.
“Eh? That’s a problem too! Mutter, mutter… That means it’s what was between my body and the swimsuit, so…j-just don’t drink any, Onii-chan!!”
“It’s not like it’s toxic and it’s the same for me anyway.”
“Oh? Then some of this Onii-chan’s… Now that I want to dri-…no!! That’s going too far!! I wish I could, but I have to do my very best to not cross that line!!”
“?”
They peered into the different “rooms” even though the lighting was flashing unreliably, perhaps because of the destroyed solar panels. Those were the structures attached perpendicularly to the supporting pillars. You can think of them as cylindrical containers the size of minivans.
“This is so weird. So what’s going on with my blood?”
“Something contained in enclosed pipes can circulate like normal. That’s why they use liquids for the batteries, cooling, and rocket boosters. Your stomach acid is only contained in a sack though, so it’s more questionable.”
When someone was not used to living in zero-g, the stomach acid could enter their throat and cause reflux esophagitis or it could even get down the windpipe and cause pneumonitis or bronchitis, but Kyousuke decided there would be no ill effects if they were only there for a short time.
They saw a nap room lined with sleeping bags strapped to beds so they would not float away and they saw an experiment room lined with planters that may have contained some kind of genetically modified plants.
One room seemed to be a dining room. Olivia was fascinated by the hamburger steak, spinach and corn cooked in butter, and other space foods in clear packages.
“They’re all premade… They have beds and a bathroom, but they don’t have a kitchen, do they?”
“Fire would be risky inside an enclosed space like this and they couldn’t fill a pot with water anyway. They apparently use a special gel shampoo instead of taking a shower.”
There really was no sign of anyone here.
They looked out a double window and finally saw a scorpion-like work robot on the outside of an opposing shaft. It was smaller than a tatami mat. Its many legs clung to the wall and its long tail appeared to be a precise manipulator. There were probably a lot more machines inside and outside the station.
“So even space development is cutting personnel costs these days…”

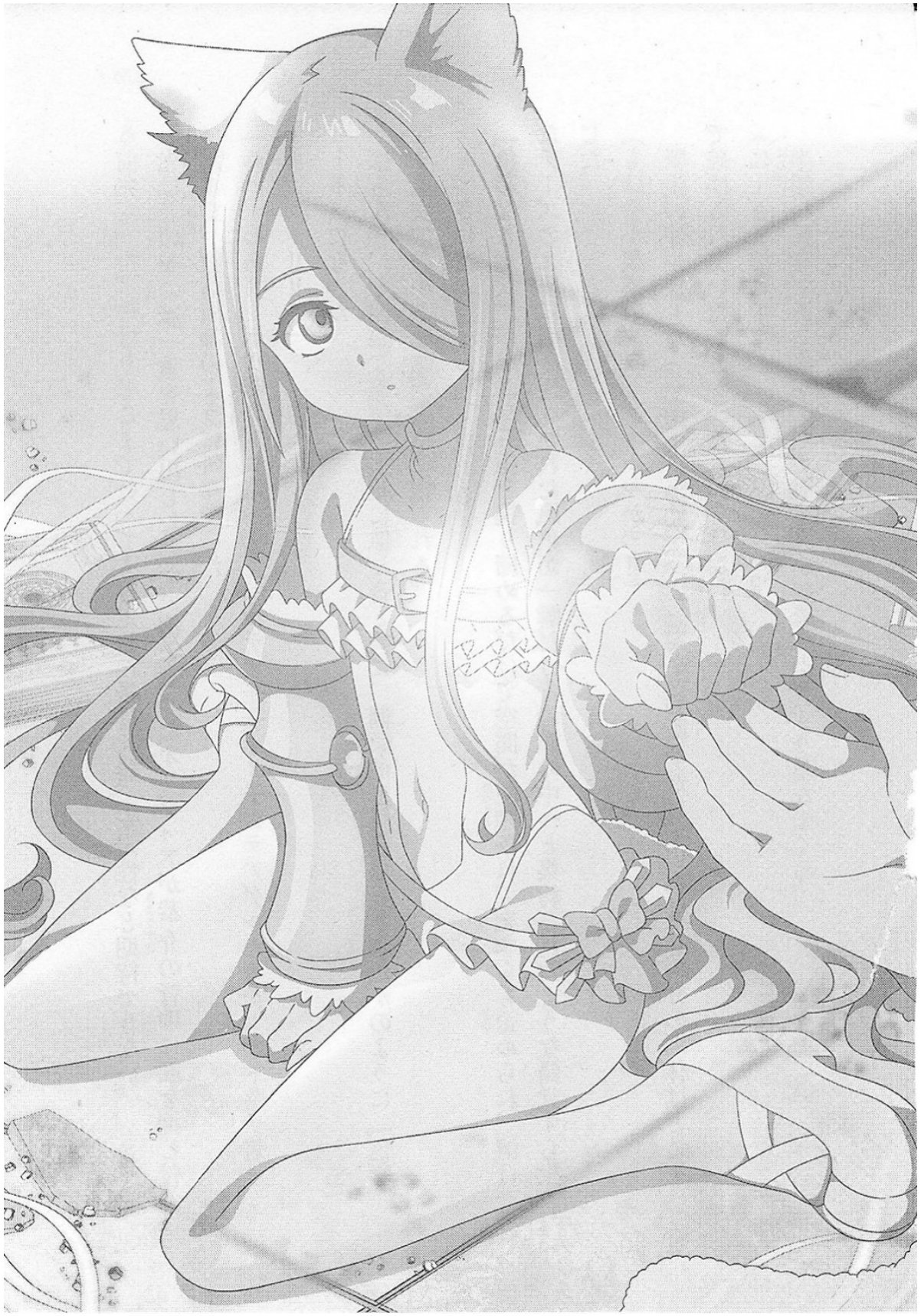
“Hm? Are you talking about some harsh fact of life?”
It was not just that they sensed no one’s presence and heard no noises; they also did not find any empty space food packages in the trash cans. The sleeping bags looked untouched and there was a full stock of the special gel shampoo. There was no sign at all of anyone living here.
Kyousuke looked beyond the thick glass that was built to protect against powerful ultraviolet.
“…That shaft over there is the one place we haven’t checked.”
“There’s no east, west, north, or south and no up or down in space, so how do people tell each other where they are in this maze of a place?”
That was when they heard what sounded like a building creaking.
It was not that loud a noise, but it was more than enough to provide a shock that was very bad for their hearts. Olivia paled and clung to Kyousuke’s waist.
“D-d-did you just hear something? The station itself wasn’t bent when we hit it, was it? I don’t want it to fall apart!!”
“No, this is…”
And before Kyousuke could finish…
<…sama…>
Something like static crackled deep in their minds.
Kyousuke and Olivia had already experienced this in the submarine, so that was all it took to fill their nerves with scorching tension.
Only the one-winged fallen angel in a white bunny suit and tailcoat-like vest had drifted from reality enough to only slowly tilt her head. It was a small motion, but it was enough for her surprisingly large breasts to jiggle in zero-g.
“Get ready, Olivia,” said Kyousuke with a bitter look.
“Y-you can’t be serious… This is outer space, Onii-chan. You’re saying she’s pursuing us beyond even the ends of the earth!?”
Jewel-like drops of water scattered from the twin blonde braids as Olivia widened her eyes and trembled. Kyousuke, on the other hand, used the approaching fear to focus his observation skills.
“She killed the White Queen, so a puny little planet is nothing to her.”
And what they had to do was the same no matter who was pursuing them. They had to destroy the System Atlantis VFX production machine and stop the broadcast of the war promotion video. The book girl probably would have continued floating there until the end of time if she could, so Kyousuke grabbed her hand, brought her and Olivia down Toy Dream OP-01’s straight corridor, and dove into the one supporting pillar they had yet to check. The vessel in a white bunny suit was as passive as a child’s balloon. And her bunny ears showed no sign of coming off despite floating upside down in zero-g.
“Found it.”
They had yet to enter the “room”, but thick communication cables left the door and entered the corridor. They were kept out of the way by the wall

and they connected to the neighboring room and the room after that. It was like connecting batteries together to increase the power supply.
Each “room” was about the size of a minivan.
That was nowhere enough space for System Atlantis, a giant computer capable of supporting a 30-billion-yen-a-film movie industry. It had been divided into multiple “rooms” and then connected together into a single parallel system.
Checking inside one of the “rooms” revealed chilly air like a supermarket’s vegetable section. It was filled with steel racks like in a cramped used bookstore. They seemed to be bolted directly to the floor and the racks were crammed full of boxy equipment which produced a veritable starry sky of pilot lights.
“…It’s all of these?” Olivia looked to all the doors lining the corridor. “There have to be at least 20 or 30 rooms. How do we destroy them? We can’t punch or kick very hard while floating around like this…”
“We don’t have to rely on anything like that,” casually replied Kyousuke. “Large equipment like this always has a cooling system. And it’s nothing special; just something like an air conditioner or fridge. Stop that and the hardware will destroy itself with its own heat.”
“How exactly do we do that?” asked Olivia.
Kyousuke grabbed a flathead screwdriver floating in the air and stabbed it into a wiring panel on the wall. The volts and amperes given on the label looked too small for such largescale equipment. That meant it was for the cooling system instead of System Atlantis itself. He must have caused a short in the wiring because a low rumbling sound soon stopped.
“Now System Atlantis will die on its own. But just to be sure, I want to check for a backup cooling-…”
<Nii-sama. Not yet.>
He was cut off.
An extremely unnatural voice seemed to directly intrude in the natural flow of time.
A moment later, the scene around them was transformed.
With a frightening boom, the Toy Dream OP-01 space station’s supporting pillar was torn away like a wild dog chomping on an empty can. The “rooms” containing System Atlantis were thrown out into empty space before they could overheat and endless stars appeared before Kyousuke’s eyes. Yes, he saw outer space itself. That view spelled death for any flesh-and-blood human and it was approaching fast.
It was just like in the submarine.
The Colorless Little Girl Dedicated to a Single Goal (aie – a – oio – ei – ueo – ioa – e – uai – ee).
She had returned.
She was exposed to the vacuum of space while wearing what amounted to a swimsuit or leotard.

Her long hair, the hair sticking up like ears, and the long, slender feline tail were all unharmed.
“Owahhh!?’
Even Kyousuke had to scream.
A large hole had been a symbol of death in the submarine, but it had an even greater impact out in space.
The artificial air inside the station began to move like it had finally remembered what to do. It gathered toward the large hole like it was being sucked into a giant vacuum cleaner. Needless to say, this was the end if it was sucked out. Without the blessing of a protective circle and Material, the summoner and vessel were merely human.
It sounded like countless bats flapping madly around a cave to avoid a flashlight beam. More and more pieces of the intentionally-loose wallpaper came off and flew toward the large hole, but unlike before, an extraordinary Unexplored-class was waiting there. The girl of around 10 did not move a finger. With a flash from the countless swords and spears surrounding her waist like a long skirt, the filler material was shredded and sucked right on out into space instead of covering the hole.
“Onii-cha-…!!”
“Tch!!”
The girls would not last as long as Kyousuke, so he made up his mind, swung his Blood-Sign around, and struck a bolt as it flew rapidly down the corridor. The bolt flew like a fungo hit in baseball, hit the sparking wiring panel, and triggered an electrical explosion in the critically shorted machinery.
The power of the blast was greater than that of the air being sucked out.
“Ghhh!!”
Kyousuke, Olivia, and the dazed book girl were all pushed away from the hole. Kyousuke then twisted his body in zero-g to adjust his grip on the Blood-Sign and strike a point on the wall with the tip. He broke through a reinforced glass cover and pressed a red button. Immediately, a shutter dropped like a guillotine between them and the Colorless Little Girl.
It proved meaningless.
<Watch out, Nii-sama.>
A childish hand broke right through the center of the thick shutter.
With the sound of a flame consuming oxygen, the entire shutter glowed orange around that hand. The melted metal split into multiple pieces in zero-g and they all became jewel-like spheres. Then they were sucked outside of Toy Dream OP-01 along with the artificial air.
The powerful wind had resumed.
With the little time that bought him, Kyousuke had grabbed some thick communication cables and tied them to Olivia and the Illegal vessel’s waists as lifelines.
He himself was swept away.

He was drawn toward the Colorless Little Girl like she was the center of a black hole.
He tried to stab his Blood-Sign sharply into the ceiling to stop himself, but it was not enough. He continued toward the Colorless Little Girl at the hole. It was all over once he actually came in contact with her. If a single fingertip or hair touched him, he would literally be reduced to tiny chunks of flesh.
(Kh…!!)
Should he throw an Incense Grenade despite knowing it was hopeless?
His fruitlessly racing thoughts began lining up meaningless possibilities like that.
But then the Colorless Little Girl moved right past him.
“…Huh?”
Questions filled his mind, but he continued moving almost automatically after being passed by. He pulled his Blood-Sign from the ceiling and this time pressed the tip against the wall. He peeled up the wallpaper on his way to the hole. With the sound of a great many flapping birds, the filler material tore from the wall. The Colorless Little Girl was no longer between him and the hole, so the spread-out wallpaper rushed toward the hole and finally stopped the hellish vacuum cleaner.
(But what just happened…?)
Kyousuke looked back and then shuddered.
The Colorless Little Girl was approaching the girls who were using thick communication cables as lifelines. He had no idea what was driving this broken Unexplored-class’s actions. She had seemed to assist him in the submarine, but no soldier could relax while a strategic stealth bomber with a broken targeting system was flying around overhead.
The Colorless Little Girl said nothing.
She only casually pulled back her right hand while facing the two girls.
Would it be an iron fist or an open-handed chop?
He recalled what had happened to the shutter that soft hand had broken through.
She was about to attack in error. And when faced with the ultimate unfairness of seeing the bombs fall on an ally’s head, Kyousuke instinctually said something truly ridiculous.
“Wait!!”
A moment later, something unbelievable happened.
That monster came to a complete stop with all five fingers gathered together for a jab at Olivia and the Illegal vessel.
He did not understand.
In fact, the Colorless Little Girl herself tilted her head without otherwise changing her pose.
“Wh-what does…this mean…?”
Olivia asked the obvious question, but no one could answer her.
Kyousuke gulped.

With Blood-Sign in hand, he slowly floated through the suddenly-calm station to approach the Colorless Little Girl. He arrived beside her. He moved past her and viewed her childish face from the front along with Olivia and the Illegal vessel.
<…>
There was no emotion visible there.
He waved his hand in front of her face, but she kept her head tilted and did not react.
No.
(Is she faithfully obeying my command to “wait”?)
That was not possible.
Or so he thought, but he decided to try another test.
“*Sit.*”
<?>
She plopped right down.
The Colorless Little Girl, who had not hesitated to kill the White Queen, pressed her small butt against Toy Dream OP-01’s floor. And with her lower legs spread to either side in a childish fashion.

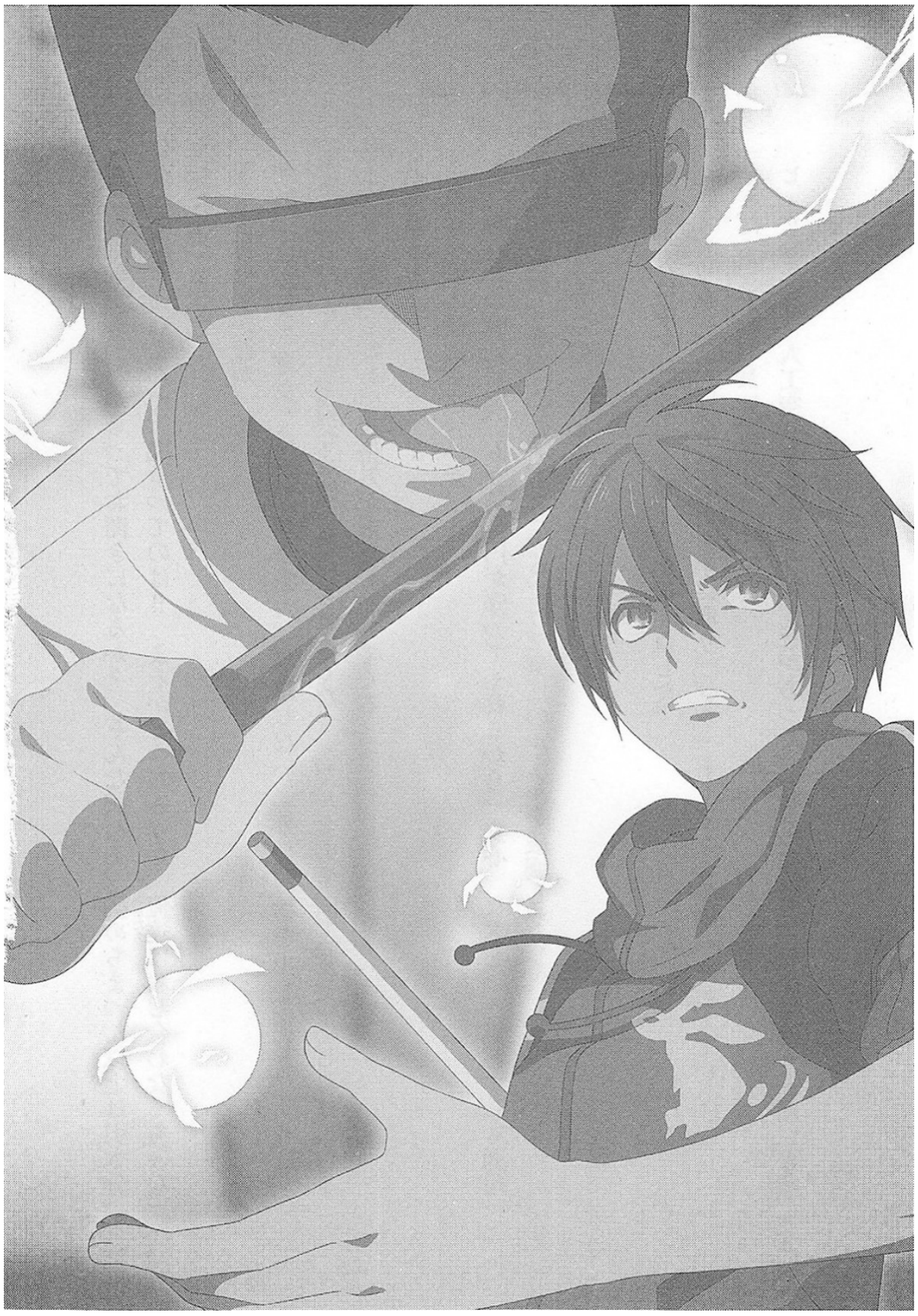


The Unexplored-class did not say anything while looking up at him, but the tail on the back of her hips rose and then curved gently to the side. The tail looked an awful lot like a question mark. And the look in the immature girl's upturned eyes was even clearer.
She wanted to know the reason behind his command.
But Kyousuke ignored that and held out his right hand.
"Shake."
There was no doubting it now.
The same small hand that had torn apart the White Queen's body was placed safely atop Kyousuke's palm. The sinister strength of a construction arm was nowhere to be found. He only felt the warm and soft skin of a girl.
(Wait. Does that mean what I think it does…?)
Kyousuke was not the only one confused.
Olivia removed the lifeline from her waist and hesitantly clung to Kyousuke's back.
"W-wow… Is she obeying your commands…?"
"No."
He heard what sounded like a thick bundle of fibers straining.
The disconcerting sound continued and the Colorless Little Girl's small body shook irregularly while she sat with her hand out. It was a clear sign that she was trying to break free of her bonds. She really was the ultimate weapon gone berserk. He could not hope for stability from her.
Olivia must have remembered how close she came to death because she frantically attempted some ventriloquism while pressing her face into his back.
"W-wah!! I am Kyousuke! Wait! Stay there and I will pat you and call you a good girl, so calm down!!!!!!"
That was the finishing blow.
With the sound of a violent electric spark, the Colorless Little Girl's small head swung to the side like she had been sniped in the side of the head.
Kyousuke immediately pulled his hand back.
Just by clenching her small fist, it looked like she had compressed space, bent light, and stretched out the scenery like melted cheese as it was instantaneously gathered into her fist.
(Is that like a miniature black hole!?)
His nervous sweat formed beads that floated through the empty air.
If he had been a moment slower, his body would have been utterly destroyed.
<Nii-sama, move away.>
The fact that she spoke at all only made it more confusing.
He could not figure out what kind of emotion was contained in even those few words. He could not help but feel like he would get burned whether he took them at face value or read deeper meaning into them.

He could not fight this monster by throwing an Incense Grenade and challenging her to a battle. Still, he held his Blood-Sign like a spear and thrust it sharply out.
But not at the Colorless Little Girl in front of him.
He sent it below his arm and behind him – toward the white bunny suit and red wing fallen angel who was floating there like a lifeless balloon.
“Eh?”
That frantic voice came from Olivia.
A deep sound burst out. The Colorless Little Girl’s small hand moved right past Kyousuke and Olivia to instead reach the vessel who was showing no sign of resistance. If he had not used his Blood-Sign at the last second, the defenseless vessel would have been torn to pieces. He had accurately hit her at the center of her body – just below the navel – so he would not just make her spin. Thanks to her complete lack of resistance, her solid wing swung around and caused her to fly further than expected. That took the book girl just barely beyond the Colorless Little Girl’s fingertips.
The emotion of anger was not evident in the juvenile body of that Unexplored-class.
She remained calm.
She took a few steps toward the Illegal vessel to make her next attack.
“Wh-why…!? What is going on, Onii-chan!?”
“Tch. It initially looked like the Colorless Little Girl was trying to protect me but with her targeting malfunctioning. If that theory is correct, then she had to have had a reason to arrive here in space. Even if her insane covering fire spreads damage all around me, she wouldn’t begin to act unless she sensed a threat to me in the first place.”
What did that mean?
And why had her first target been the defenseless Illegal vessel who was no longer contracted with anyone?
“I thought it was sudden,” said Kyousuke in an apparent change of subject.
Some aspects of it had seemed off to him.
…Would you use mouth-to-mouth to give someone a poison deadly enough to kill almost immediately after swallowing it?
…Would she really just ignore her target’s coughed-up blood on her lips?
And more importantly, would Shiroyama Kyousuke of all people really *give up so readily* when watching someone – even an enemy – losing their life before his eyes?
What if he had sensed something he could not quite put to words and that had caused him to subconsciously tap the brakes?
What had he sensed?
“War Criminal was killed by poison. He wasn’t stabbed or shot; he was poisoned, which is much harder to examine. What if that was only a bluff using paint that changes color in the mouth? Then Boy A would be hiding and watching us for a chance to strike now that we stopped paying any attention to him. It would mean we’re still in danger!!”

They heard a dull thud.
A handled grenade that looked like a fat-ended club was thrown in from a different corridor perpendicularly connected to this one. Had the dazed vessel had a reason for letting go of her tote bag? Kyousuke actually hoped this was a simple explosive like back in the submarine. But it was not. This time, it was an Incense Grenade for the Summoning Ceremony. It directly opened an Artificial Sacred Ground.
The pursued poison girl was drawn toward the point of the blast.
And someone else was pulled in from elsewhere.
“War Criminal…! You idiot! You goddamned idiot!!”
The extraordinary Colorless Little Girl had killed the White Queen like ripping the legs off a bug, so challenging her to a battle using the Summoning Ceremony was the height of folly. Kyousuke and Olivia were also contained within the Artificial Sacred Ground that War Criminal had set up. Having their Materials fight here would be like asking the Colorless Little Girl to attack. It was like holding a sword duel while locked in a cage with a ferocious beast.
In a way, the vessel was more complex than Boy A.
In the end, what was inside that book girl who tearfully remained by the crazed summoner’s side?
Was it love or fear?
Was she willing to descend into the depths of hell with him, or was she relying on the safety at the eye of the storm?
Whether she was pursuing pure love or pathetically struggling to escape her fear, the end result may have been the same.
Just like the strange connection between robber and hostage.
It was not just a loop. It was twisted like a Mobius strip.
“…Don’t screw with me, Kyousuke-chan.”
For that summoner and vessel, it was like their hopelessly ugly marital vows.
He smiled savagely at the poison girl who was willing to modify her own body if her partner wished it.
And then Boy A spoke once more.
“I don’t care about the Colorless Little Girl or whatever. When two countries are fighting a war, are they gonna stop just cause there’s an earthquake or volcanic eruption? Of course not. Once war breaks out, there’s no such thing as a draw!! It doesn’t matter what anyone else is doing; we’ve gotta fight to the death here!!”
Kyousuke could only click his tongue.
The Colorless Little Girl was like a displeased cat right now. If he held back on his Material so as not to stimulate her, he could not avoid War Criminal’s intense attacks. But if he fought with all his strength, the extraordinary power that had instantly killed the White Queen would attack.
He was trapped.
This was a truly unpredictable death match.

He could not even rely on the protective circle to keep him safe in this battle. The Colorless Little Girl broke the rules of the Third just by existing there.
“Wh-what are you going to do, Onii-chan!?”
“…”
Shiroyama Kyousuke silently raised his Blood-Sign.
He grabbed one of the 3 initial White Thorns and placed it at the tip of his Blood-Sign.
“Yes. That’s what I want to see.”
He heard something slicing sharply through the air. War Criminal had pulled his three devil sticks out of the air.



The leader of the underworld even licked one of them as he made his statement.
“Let’s aim every last gun and cannon we have at each other and have a direct shootout, Kyousuke-chan. Flashes of light, explosive blasts, and vibrations that permeate your body!! Ha ha! It’s not a war unless you give into the trigger happiness until your mind goes blank!!”

Part 2

The rules had changed.
First of all, he had to win this battle no matter what. He had to hit the White Thorns, knock the Petals into Spots, and arrange the acquired letters to summon Materials from the other world. He had to use the Cost and rock-paper-scissors Sound Range to overwhelm his opponent's Material and knock them out of the fight.
That was an absolute must.
Because not even riding on a giant meteor plunging toward the earth would reduce the power of a handgun pressed against your head.
But at the same time, moving around too much would draw the Colorless Little Girl's attention. She may have come here to save Kyousuke, but you could not rely on a bomber with a broken targeting system. It was obvious she would attack enemy and ally alike. Once the bomb was falling overhead, it was too late.
He could not defeat the Colorless Little Girl with the cards he had on hand. He could not harm her even if he summoned one of the Three from the Unexplored-class.
Thus, he had to ignore her.
One option was to avoid her while getting a clean hit on the War Criminal's Material.
The other option was to direct her toward War Criminal so he was being attacked on two fronts and could not escape.
Those were the rules of this battle.
"Hh!!"
War Criminal fought like normal by launching the initial hit on the cubic Rose, but Kyousuke launched a White Thorn toward a completely unrelated part of the floor. The Thorn ricocheted sharply, approached the Colorless Little Girl from behind, passed below her legs, and flew in front of her face.
<?>
Her child eyes moved…no, were guided.
It was like a cat reacting to a toy. Her slender hand reached out into the empty air to grab at something. And…
"Ha ha! That's a dirty trick for a first move!!"
Space itself split apart.
Whether it was a Regulation-class or an Unexplored-class, a solid hit from the Colorless Little Girl would one-shot any Material. The fallen angel girl

had transformed into a red slime Material, but she escaped the ultimate joker's small hand by jumping backwards…or rather, by directing the Material's aim towards an unrelated oxygen tank behind her.
Toy Dream OP-01's straight corridor…no, the supporting pillar itself broke down the middle.
Kyousuke and Olivia were safe thanks to the protective circle and green slime respectively, but they would have been thrown out into the certain doom of space otherwise.
Yes, they really had been dumped into the vacuum of space this time.
<Wah, wahhh, wahhhhh!? Onii…Onii-chan!!>
"Stay calm, Olivia. We're fine as long as the Artificial Sacred Ground remains!"
He did not want to worry her, so he omitted that they were done for once the battle was over. The winner was granted 90s of a Chain state, but the loser was immediately stripped of their protective circle and Material and they would be exposed to the vacuum.
The blue expanse of the earth lay below their feet.
A mere 10 minutes of immortality felt so unreliable. If the pull of gravity grabbed them by some kind of mistake, there would be no escaping it. They would be roasted in the deadly atmosphere until not even dust remained.
One small piece of good luck was that War Criminal had been the one to throw the Incense Grenade and open the Artificial Sacred Ground. That meant it used his footing as its base surface. When the station was torn in two, the 20m cube had appeared in reference to where Boy A stood.
Kyousuke and Olivia had been thrown out into the vacuum, but they did not have to worry about an endless journey through space as long as that wall contained them. They could continue fighting.
Kyousuke only had to focus on the position of the Petals and Spots for now. War Criminal had to remain inside the broken tunnel of a corridor inside Toy Dream OP-01, so Kyousuke had the wider field of vision and could aim for more Petals.
There was one problem.
(The Colorless Little Girl shattered the Artificial Sacred Ground with her first attack on the sub. *She can do that at any time.* If we lose that divine protection in the vacuum of space, there's nothing we can do!)
He needed to settle this quickly, but rushing too much would draw her attention.
In order to avoid directly stimulating the Colorless Little Girl, he aimed his White Thorn along a detour near the distant wall of the Artificial Sacred Ground, but then he noticed something off about the scenery as a whole.
There was an odd light coming from the blue planet below them.
<What...is that? Is it coming from East Europe where my kingdom is???>
"Olivia."
<Those fluffy things…aren't clouds? Is it a whole lot of dust!? A-and is that orange glow from fire!?>

“Olivia, focus on the battle!!”
When satellites took photos of the Amazon rainforest, it was apparently possible to see the spreading flames from slash-and-burn agriculture and from forest fires. But the fire had to be at the level of hectares before that was possible.
Something was happening.
And it involved East Europe and Kingdom F, home of Olivia Highland.
(We destroyed System Atlantis and stopped the Blue Film that was meant to guide public opinion over the course of its four episodes. …*But did they force it through regardless?* Damn, did the US Congress give the go ahead for the Silver Resource War!?)
The Blue Film had lost its absolute importance.
Destroying System Atlantis was no longer the key to solving this.
In war, the troops were not necessarily deployed only once the government had made the final decision. If they were already waiting at the scene, they could begin the attack immediately after the sign was given.
(They changed their method…)
Kyousuke and Olivia did not have a second to spare.
They could no longer stop this in advance.
(Even if I summoned a demon!!)
Kyousuke kicked off wall pieces larger than tatami mats to cut across the cubic Artificial Sacred Ground.
But *not* to take up a better position to acquire plenty of Petals with his White Thorns.
He moved in between War Criminal and the Colorless Little Girl.
Of course, he was still engaged in a deadly battle with the enemy summoner. Even with the ideals of Alice (with) Rabbit, Kyousuke would not abandon the battle to protect the enemy.
This was quite the opposite.
Illegal’s leader had set up this game of chicken, but that was proof that he really did understand how frightening the Colorless Little Girl was. He was making small adjustments to the distance between them to make sure he was never close enough for her to decide to attack.
Shiroyama Kyousuke artlessly charged into the risky minefield in between them.
If he stepped on and detonated a mine, the blast would catch War Criminal in his supposed safe zone.
“You…!!”
He did not have time to roar.
The bomber with a malfunctioning targeting system was finally moving.
<I will do it, Nii-sama. I will fight.>
She casually extended her small hands. They missed Kyousuke who altered his path by striking a floating piece of the station with his Blood-Sign, but those ten fingers filled with mysterious power gently touched War Criminal’s protective circle.

The resultant boom and shower of sparks was like someone touching a train's high-voltage line.
"Gwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!?"
None of the rules applied.
The Third Summoning Ceremony ruled by the White Queen had long since been abandoned.
War Criminal entered a tailspin after being baptized into the Fourth.
But it did not end there.
The summoner who freely controlled his three devil sticks managed to stay focused on the main issue despite the extreme pain, his muddled mind, and his rapid spinning.
No matter what happened, this was a Summoning Ceremony battle where Material fought Material.
And Shiroyama Kyousuke had focused on messing with the Colorless Little Girl. He had failed to focus on building up his Material.
"You…dumbass… Too bad, Kyousuke-chan. I've reached the Divine-class while you took your detour!!!!!!"
Rumpelstiltskin.
Divine-class. Cost: 15. Sound Range: Middle.
Despite the grand name, it was a thumb-sized dwarf that was summoned.
Rather than a divine figure from a world religion or mythology, he had only left his name as a fairy in a fairy tale.
But a god was a god.
And the ridiculously-long name made him more useful than Odin, Zeus, or another head god when used in the Summoning Ceremony where the number of letters determined how much power could be drawn out.
Kyousuke was still in the Regulation-class, so he could not overcome the power difference no matter how he launched his White Thorns.
It was true War Criminal had no way of resisting the Colorless Little Girl, but Kyousuke and Olivia were done for if Boy A and the fallen angel got just one clean hit in.
"Ha ha…"
One hit versus one hit.
Just like a duel in a Western, the exchange of a single attack would decide everything.
"I never thought I could enjoy such an old-fashioned war in the modern age of drones and cyber-attacks!!"
With his eyes hidden by his ruler-like sunglasses, Boy A prepared to give his vessel a command, but then he noticed something.
Where was the crucial target? Where was the Material being controlled by Olivia Highland?
And just before great meaning poured into that slight gap, a heavy blow ran through War Criminal from directly above.
"Wha-!?"

<Hnhhhhh!!>
The enemy could not hear her, but Olivia's voice rang inside Kyousuke's head.
A Regulation-class shaped like a giant spear broke through Toy Dream OP-01's roof. Of course, there was no way of harming Boy A when he was surrounded by the protective circle, but War Criminal had thrown the Incense Grenade and destroying the floor beneath his feet took away the Artificial Sacred Ground's base surface. Plus, simply shaking his vision would confuse him.
But would she really go that far?
It was the end for her if either the Divine-class or the Colorless Little Girl even grazed her with an attack, so would she really charge into the line of fire on the front line?
It was pure insanity, but that was why it had successfully caught War Criminal off guard.
And that created a brief opening.
"Colorless Little Girl Dedicated to a Single Goal (aie – a – oio – ei – ueo – ioa – e – uai – ee)."
<Nii-sama. What? Nii-sama.>
Did that mean anything, or was it only a reflexive action?
In the face of such great danger, Kyousuke held the top of his Blood-Sign out toward the juvenile girl's nose. And he moved it like a cat toy.
"Sic him."
Even the vacuum of space was compressed.
Just as Kyousuke swung his head with all his might to dodge, the girl's hand caught War Criminal and his protective circle, sending him flying like a meteor. He crashed into and crushed Rumpelstiltskin and both summoner and vessel were buried deep inside the Toy Dream OP-01 space station.

Part 3

It was essentially the same as when they had first arrived on the space station.
The defeated Boy A and his vessel would be safe as long as they were floating inside the station where they had artificial air to breath. The problem was Kyousuke and Olivia. The Chain state only lasted 90 seconds. But reestablishing the Artificial Sacred Ground against the Colorless Little Girl would be like stripping off your clothing and entering the lion cage. Each passing second was a painful loss.
While the protective circle was in effect, Kyousuke and the giant spear that was Olivia hurried inside Toy Dream OP-01's airlock.
"Bwah!!"
Kyousuke finally took a deep breath once he was inside the badly-damaged space station. The entire station was unnaturally twisted and it was noticeably tilting in one direction. Whether it was thrown out into space or burned up in the atmosphere, it would not last long like this.
"…Onii-chan…"
"Let's tie up War Criminal while he's defeated. Then we need to get to the control room. None of this is over. The Colorless Little Girl is still floating out there in the vacuum of space."
"What are we even doing anymore…?" She sounded on the verge of tears.
"The Silver Resource War has already started. *With the supposed mastermind passed out in here!!* Look over there!! You can already see the fires burning!! This is past the point of the videos or Illegal mattering. So what is our goal!?"
"Isn't it obvious?"
But Kyousuke spat out a response.
For the time being, he could not hear the threatening calls of "Nii-sama". She was still floating out there with nothing to protect her, but did this mean all direct threats to Kyousuke had been eliminated?
It was only her targeting ability that was broken.
She would not go off unless she had her finger on the trigger.
…Or was that as naïve an assessment as the White Queen worshippers had made?
"Then we just have to stop that war. Olivia, we can freely control beings that surpass the mythological gods."
He said it so readily that it did not sound real to Olivia at first.

Her face crumpled up in a way that left him unsure if she was smiling or crying.
"…That's easier said than done."
It was like a groan.
Her unsteady voice sounded like a sob.
"I would love to do that… That's why we dived to the ocean floor, launched ourselves into space, and worked so hard. But it wasn't enough!! Wasn't that weird video supposed to be what mattered!? I thought we could keep the war from starting if we put a stop to that!!"
The other side was writing the rules of the game, so Kyousuke and Olivia's goal had been to stop that.
But this was not a sports tournament with a referee ensuring the rules were followed.
The other side had ignored them.
They had ignored their own rules and forced their pieces across the game board.
Reality could be surprisingly careless, it was made to benefit the strong, and it allowed for all sorts of unfair things. Prove a thug wrong with an airtight argument and they would only click their tongue and burn you with the end of their cigarette. This was another example of the hopelessness of reality. Kyousuke knew this all too well after being manipulated by the White Queen so often.
But he had not broken.
Why was that?
"…There is just one power that can resist this kind of unfairness."
He was not looking down on her as he gave her advice.
Right now, Olivia was the same as Kyousuke. She had followed the rules and supposedly snagged a come-from-behind win, but that victory had been unfairly snatched from her. This was her heart nearly breaking under the weight of the overwhelming sense of futility.
He had overcome this same thing himself, so he understood.
This was only an illusion. It was a transient delusion. In the truest depths of her heart, there was a part of her soul that had not broken.
He was sure of it.
"Listen, Olivia. Remember your purest feelings. Why was it you came out here beyond the ends of the earth? Was it because I told you to? Was it to live up to your mother's expectations? *No.* You had your own reason. And if you remember that, you can still fight. It doesn't matter who you're up against."
"You can't overcome this kind of thing with willpower!!"
"Look," cut in Shiroyama Kyousuke.
He had tasted the dirt time and time again and that was why he did not hesitate.
"Look, Olivia. Remember what drives human beings. This isn't about those that lurk beyond the gods. Remember what it is that drives those of us born

with our feet planted on the earth! That is enough to change the world. This isn't silly idealism. I have experience telling me it is a hard fact and it's what allowed me to make it this far while up against that hopeless White!! Is that not enough proof for you!?"
Kyousuke pointed at one of the monitors that were everywhere in the space station. System Atlantis had been the top priority, but since it was a giant station and not just a satellite, it also had observation equipment and experiments set up.
So it also functioned as an observation satellite looking down on the earth from the heavens.
"…Eh?"
Olivia's initially angry eyes pursued the image and then filled with thought after a flash of surprise.
Nothing she was seeing made any sense.
It was even more unreasonable than the US Army forcibly sending its game pieces into war.
The vantage point on the screen was unfamiliar, but the location was quite familiar to her. With an overhead view like on a paper map, she saw Kingdom F in East Europe. She saw a stone city surrounded by mountains. The veil of black clouds was actually dark smoke blowing in from somewhere. It was a tiny area from the perspective of those who ruled the world economy, but it was the most important scene to Olivia Highland.
And beyond that black stain, something had filled a small plaza and the large road.
"It…can't be. Why…?"
A middle-aged man held a clearly outdated rifle. A housewife carried a handgun that was lacking in power even for self-defense. Children no older than Olivia were gathered around a forcibly-modified tank. These were not trained soldiers. More and more doors opened while a flower shop owner, a church's nun, and other ordinary civilians flooded the streets.
Countless flags were waving.
They were the flag of Kingdom F – of the Flanguild Permanently Neutral Kingdom.
"No, no, no!! If you show intent to fight, they won't be able to stop!! If you point at us royals and call us tyrants, they might at least spare your lives!!"
"Kingdom F uses a universal conscription system. If another country attacks, the ordinary people will take up arms along with the specially-trained knights. Rachel explained that, remember?"
"I know about that system!! But that's not the point! Kingdom F is done for anyway, so they don't have to follow its rules. They can forget all about the musty old royal family. If they just surrender and accept the new era, they might not have to risk their lives here!!!!!!"
Olivia had gone pale as she shouted her protests, but her voice could not reach the people on the monitor.

In addition to the people in the streets, there were also some figures racing along the roofs of the stone buildings. Those would be the knights who used the Summoning Ceremony in Kingdom F.
Everyone would know the end result of a fight with a superpower.
But they still did not raise their hands in surrender.
There was only one response here.
“Olivia. They’re doing this because they want you and your mother to have a home to return to.”
This time.
This time Olivia seemed unable to reflexively snap back at him.
For one thing, Queen Sinceria and Princess Olivia were out of the kingdom at the moment. Preserving the bloodline did not require defending the kingdom’s land with the people’s lives.
So it was not about the individuals.
Protecting the system of monarchy was not enough for them.
They could not stand to have nothing but rubble remain when Olivia Highland returned home. They wanted to protect the scenery of Kingdom F and all the memories it contained.
That was all.
All those people were putting their lives on the line for a formless feeling like that.
“I don’t understand.” Olivia’s voice was trembling. “The knights and chamberlains might be steeped in the Summoning Ceremony, but the normal people don’t even know what we look like. They might casually greet us if they see us in the city, but they forget all about us the second they look away. It isn’t an issue of how warm or cold hearted they are; that’s just how it works. So why would they go this far?”
“That’s right, Olivia.”
Kyousuke did not reject that with some nice-sounding words.
This was not some silly story where they miraculously remembered for no reason.
There was no need to trick her with empty words.
“That means they’re throwing away their lives *for someone they’ve never even seen*. They’re relying on the legends of the ‘musty old royal family’ you mentioned. They’re desperately clinging to the outlines of what they must protect and struggling despite knowing their efforts will never succeed.”
“…”
Olivia stared silently at the flat-screen monitor as Kyousuke continued.
“When a large country wants to complete an invasion all at once, they make a blitzkrieg strike meant to be quick but decisive.”
He was not predicting their destruction.
They needed an accurate picture of the situation if they were to overcome the actual threat.
“They will of course secure air superiority, but their first act will be destroying the communication network. Next, they will destroy the main

defense facilities with cruise missiles and rockets. Last, the actual soldiers and tanks will sever the supply line to isolate the target's cities and fortresses. For large countries, a war isn't a head-on clash. They do not use the number of enemies killed to judge success. They use the number of allies that survived. So they will always arrange things such that the enemy simply can't choose to use their full strength. For the politicians in Washington DC, the enemy isn't the foreign generals and heroes; it's the voters watching TV in their living rooms."
"What…what does that matter?" muttered Olivia without even turning around.
She could not take her eyes off the scene playing out on the monitor.
"You're basically saying they're going to attack my home all they want, aren't you? Even though we haven't done anything wrong and we've never even heard of the East Europe Axis?"
"This is still the first phase. They're targeting the mountains that surround Kingdom F as a natural fortress. Kingdom F is a landlocked country surrounded by mountains. They aren't going to start a mass slaughter immediately after destroying the communication network. First, they should focus on destroying the radar sites along the mountain ridges and the pylons for the high-voltage lines running along the slopes."
"So…"
"…You don't get it?"
Kyousuke reached over her shoulder and touched the screen to draw her attention to another part of the satellite image.
"Then let's check the carbon dioxide distribution. There's a lot of dark smoke, but I don't see any urban areas on fire. This is all being blown in from the natural fortress of the mountains. *So they're only attacking unmanned facilities for the first phase.* It's caused a widespread wildfire and that looks pretty shocking, but the actual population density is zero. There still haven't been any human victims. It's only the empty mountains that are burning. If we stop it here, the targets of this baseless war can keep their lives!!"
He distinctly heard a gasp.
Olivia's small shoulders jumped while she viewed the wildfire footage with her back to him.
"Really…?"
"Yes."
"We can really save everyone in Kingdom F…?"
"Yes!! We can do it. The two of us can save them. You can do more than shout *help me*! This time, Olivia, you can race to the scene with me as Alice (with) Rabbit!!"
She was so close, but he did not place his hands on her shoulders.
Right now, she did not need comfort for a weak soul.

If he made that mistake, she would rot away. Just like the White Queen's sweet words and charisma had provided an indiscriminate sense of security to so many people.
So…
"Turn around, Olivia!! With your own strength!! If you're going to live up to the lifestyle of Freedom Award 903 with me, then face reality and change it with your own hands!!"
Olivia rubbed her eyes with her small hands.
After jewel-like tears scattered through the zero-g space station, she turned around. She turned from the monitor displaying the coming destruction and looked instead to Shiroyama Kyousuke's face.
They looked each other in the eye.
He saw the willpower there.
"…What should I do…?"
The kingdom's princess faced the harsh reality once more.
No.
The look on her face was not that of a fairy tale princess simply hoping to be rescued.
"What are we going to do? How can we save everyone? Hurry up and tell me! Hurry!!!!!!"
"That's obvious. They're the ones that changed the rules. So instead of remaining prisoners of that video, let's change the phase itself."
Revenge-obsessed Biondetta had once called herself a whispering demon.
Then what was Shiroyama Kyousuke as he answered the no-longer-tearful girl?
Whatever he was, he proposed an answer far more repulsive than a demon addicted to bathing in blood.
He did not even hesitate.
"Let's take a shortcut along the most direct route. Let's drop Toy Dream OP-01 from the sky and hitch a ride straight to the Silver Resource War."
The summoner and vessel were in motion once more.
The LCD screen behind them displayed countless fluttering flags that represented the majesty and pride of the Flanguild Permanently Neutral Kingdom.
And those flags had some text written on the edges with spray paint or thick permanent markers.
"It is to answer the cries for help that I fight."
The boy and girl spoke in unison.
"As do we: as you wish."
"As do we: as you wish."
She would no longer rely on the words "help me".
Olivia Highland would fight to protect a kingdom and become a true trump card.

Between the Lines 3

A gray-haired old man breathed a heavy sigh aboard the Missing Princess cruise ship. He was inside his office which contained an odd combination of thick Western tomes and fairy tale picture books.
He wore a formal tailcoat since he had been on the party stage earlier, but he had removed the bowtie and the restrictive coat.
But that was not enough to improve his mood.
He wanted to stand up from his leather chair, but he could not lift himself from it, as if he were glued down. That prevented him from looking away from the flat-screen monitor directly in front of him.
“We are in front of the White House here in DC! The official go ahead for the Silver Resource War was just announced, but they did not allow any questions from the press and it seems the press secretary has already left. This is unusual behavior, but according to an insider…”
The old man asked himself how this could have happened.
The Blue Film war promotion videos had been scheduled for 4 episodes in all, but a number of problems had caused the distribution plan to fail after only the first episode. They had likely caught scent of the plan stalling out and forced the war through in advance, but the normal people would be unable to keep up with these world events. Even if the Silver Resource War ended in complete victory, they would only be met with a storm of boos.
What would happen if an airport’s runways were only half built and you decided to send the airplanes out anyway because construction was behind schedule? The answer was obvious.
Something had gone wrong in this supposedly fixed game of old maid.
If the nonexistent East Europe Axis could not be made into the villain, then the dirty joker would end up with those who had started the war. Real war was complex, but the common people always viewed it as a battle between good and evil. And a country that was said to have never once suffered defeat would not accept a stain on that record. So who would end up holding the old maid in the end?
It no longer mattered who had come up with the idea and started gathering members.
They would *make it so* Toy Dream had been manipulating the US all along. Thus they could say they did nothing wrong.
“…”

He felt like he was watching his own castle crumbling while in some removed location. It was like building a grand estate in Beverly Hills as the prize for many long years of effort and then watching it collapse due to a freak sinkhole.
He repeated the word “why” in his heart just once more.
But the nuance was different this time. The gray-haired old man suddenly wondered why he had wanted the Silver Resource War to succeed. He had been obsessed with getting that done, but now that he thought back, he had no idea why he had wanted it to succeed.
If racking his brains was not enough to find a reason, had it been planted in him by someone else?
While he thought, he heard a soft electronic beep.
It did not come from the LCD monitor.
It came from the personal smartphone he had for his family. It was a character mobile device that let you include illustrations and icons of Toy Dream characters. He had bought up a major ISP and social media company to make it.
He had received an Assort Message, which was like a combination of an email and chat service.
“Have you caught on yet?”
It was a short message.
But for some reason, the attached *icon of a heroine he had never seen before* brought a prickling pain to a corner of the old man’s mind. He could not seem to process what it was and that inspired an impatience he simply could not suppress.
He would never find the answer no matter how much he thought about it. Not when he could not remember why he gave the Missing Princess its name.
“You used Kingdom F as a motif for the children’s books and movies you made, but a government official convinced you they were actually a den of villains and you felt like your works had been defiled. That is why you helped this blatant resource war.
“Psychologists use the term ‘dyadic group’ to describe how people take criminal actions more readily in groups than as individuals. A more familiar example may be how anonymous message boards are more prone to violent statements than social networks with visible screennames.
“You cannot properly perceive the White Queen.
“That means you are in no position to directly know of her death or to be hit by the resultant confusion.
“But the general unease and confusion that has widely permeated society after the White Queen’s death may have influenced this bold action of yours.
“However.
“You should already know the truth about the East Europe Axis.
“I have no sympathy for you. You are literate enough to make an informed decision, so you must take responsibility for your decisions. If you were

aware of your influence and still intentionally spread malicious disinformation, then there is no room for lenience."
Normally, he would have shrugged off unilateral accusations from some faceless and nameless person. He was a world-renowned fairy tale author. Any online store would be flooded with millions of reviews. He felt far more pressure on a daily basis than the average person.
And yet.
He felt an unpleasant sweat coating his back. He could not shrug this off. He felt an explosion of overwhelming shame that he could only compare to having his own child or grandchild see him doing something truly foolish.
"You lost the right to author fairy tales from the moment you decided to harm others by manipulating the emotions of the readers. Especially when it involved a war that would take countless lives."
The old man's vision wavered at this criticism that came with no room for negotiation or compromise.
This went beyond the inexplicable icon.
Tears wet the corners of his eyes and he saw an illusion of a small girl pointing at him.
Even though no such girl should exist.
"It's too bad. I had hoped there was a miniscule chance everything could return to normal and I would one day be completed by you and turned into a book that spreads smiles around the world.
"But this proves it.
"I will never be completed. This fairy tale will always remain incomplete."
"Wait…"
He had not opened a voice input app, but the old man spoke to the character mobile device without thinking. His trembling lips shouted at the smartphone to stop these mysterious Assort Messages that kept pouring in.
"Could you be…no, that never existed… Who are you? I never had anything to do with the Phantom Girl. That's only a rumor that my passionate fans have spread around. Or…it couldn't be, but are you saying it really did exist…!?"
The strange feeling in a corner of his mind grew bigger than ever.
He was on the verge of grasping something. He was sure of it.
But that terribly fleeting outline sent more merciless words his way.
"Break your pen today and retire immediately. A fairy tale author who has forgotten how to make people smile has no place in Toy Dream."
Not even a silver bullet straight through the heart would have been as great a shock.
The old man was certain of it.
He could form no more words with his index finger or his trembling lips.
He was finally feeling the loneliness of having left his ideals behind in some distant land.
He needed a long time.

His fingers were trembling more than an alcoholic going cold turkey. He could not sketch a single image or even place his fingers on that 5-inch screen. He took his time to take deep breaths and barely managed to pick up the smartphone without dropping it.
This time, he did open a voice input program and managed to force out his voice despite having trouble breathing.
Even the high-quality program failed more than three times to interpret his voice properly.
“But the war has begun. I doubt my head alone would be able to stop it.”
“Yes, of course it has. Because I used my authority with Government to push it in that direction. I mostly left hints that an environmental group was preparing to buy the land and investigate the effects of mining there. I was telling them they had better claim that land and the mining rights in a hurry or this would be a heap of trouble for them.”
The old man did not understand what most of that meant.
He did not even know what Government was, but the messages continued.
“The US will not lose. Or rather, no matter how badly things are going for them and no matter what happens, they will find a way to claim they did not lose.
“Stopping the first and second attacks is meaningless if the US will only propose further operations to reclaim their reputation.
“So we need to drain all the pus the first time around.
“It is only by doing that and then stopping the world’s most powerful army that we can stop the giant gears of the Silver Resource War. There is no other effective resolution when looking at the big-picture strategy instead of the small-picture tactics.”
“That’s crazy. Are you saying you’ve started a war to stop a war?”
“Yes, but worry not.”
There was no hesitance in her response.
And that told the old man something.
This mysterious person was using the icon of a heroine he did not recall designing. This Phantom Girl had slipped from the palm of his hand. But this told him there was someone who stood much closer to her than he did. Was it possible he would have been the one closest to her if he had not done this?
And the girl relying on that trump card had more to say.
“I have the ultimate ace up the sleeve, so it doesn’t matter who I’m up against. When he is supporting the life of someone seeking help, there is no chance whatsoever he will lose in combat.”

A thunk ran through a distant luxury apartment as a character mobile device was flipped over on the table so the screen could not be seen. It was a lot like flipping over a card.

The striped bikini girl buried her small face in the thick fur of the 5m wild animal she used as a sofa.
“What’s this sudden outburst of emotion?” asked the modified China dress beauty. “Did you come across some moving masterpiece?”
“…Id’s nuffing, you idyit…”
She did not want anyone at all to see the look on her face.

Facts

- The summoner’s location when the Artificial Sacred Ground opens is used as the base surface, so an artificial gravity is preserved even in zero-g.
- System Atlantis was successfully destroyed on the space station, so the original data of the Blue Film’s four episodes and the hardware used to produce it were lost.
- Wait. Sit. Shake. They all worked on the Colorless Little Girl.
- Kyousuke used the Colorless Little Girl to defeat War Criminal. Do not overlook that he was always behind in both Cost and Sound Range during the actual Summoning Ceremony battle.
- The US Congress forced a decision without waiting for public opinion to be manipulated.
- The Silver Resource War has begun.
- Shiroyama Kyousuke decided to drop the space station from the sky to enter the battlefield that Kingdom F has become.
- They can still be saved. Both the kingdom forced into a war and the people who live there.

Stage 04: Crushing the Silver War from the Heavens

“Then I’ll do it myself.”
*“I don’t care if it violates my rules or causes my soul to rot away. I will **** you!!!!!!”*
(Stage 04 Open 08/04 06:00 “UTC+03 Flanguild time”)
Crushing the Silver War from the Heavens

Part 1

Even in August, the early morning was cold enough to see one's breath. Since the country's primary agricultural products were rare alpine plants rather than wheat or beef, you can probably imagine just how biting a cold it was.

The small Eastern European country was surrounded by steep mountains. It was known as Kingdom F.

The orange of dawn collided with and reflected off the thick layer of fog washing over the surface, creating some uniquely picturesque scenery. The breathtaking view looked like fine gold dust had been laid out across every inch of the earth as far as the eye could see.

There was no real reason it had to be this country.

The vein had just so happened to be nearby. And it would have been a pain if the country had later decided to resist, so they had to be crushed in advance. Either way, the countries and regions the war reached were treated as a part of the villainous East Europe Axis. As long as they followed the rules of war based on international treaties, the US Army would not be criticized for their attack.

The actual foreign policy that used the help of Toy Dream was not actually going that well, but the boots on the ground had not been informed of that and simply played their role.

An electronic information control plane with antenna rods all over its fuselage was taking a pleasure flight just outside the national border. It was a mobile base for a war of the internet age. The fact that the flying command room was right there on the front line felt somewhat brazen.

The aircraft was the size of a large passenger plane and it contained countless computers and the technicians to operate them, but it also had a fancy visitor's room where the high-ranking officers were gathered.

They had a map spread out on a table and were moving small pieces across it while holding a secret conversation.

"Phase 1 is progressing well. The East Europe Axis's communication and information network have been accurately severed along with the power lines. Both wired and wireless communications are down. This really is a small country. They do seem to have some tanks given modern modifications, but they have shown no real resistance to our aerial forces."

"To the west is Varsfork Fortress. To the north is Ilijinika Tunnel Shelter. Once we have completed our groundwork in Phase 2, we will send a division

of troops to each and pry open the front gate of the East Europe Axis's mountain fortress. At the same time, we plan to send some special commandos in through the relatively gentle mountain ridge to the east."
"…Tch. Curse those marines. Are they trying to steal the credit even when we're fighting deep in the mountains?"
"This should be over in a day or two. Please be cautious so none of the small neighboring countries try to attack us. If those nearby countries confuse our humanitarianism for weakness and refuse to allow us through their airspace, the disruption of our air supply line could delay the timetable. Of course, this is more of a political issue than a military one."
"Make sure even the lowest grunt is told to behave like a gentleman. This is not just an issue of morals. I am discussing textbook sociology here. The intensity of the postwar terrorism hinges on our actions here. Do not force our noble American way onto them. Make allowances for the local national character and do it by the book. I don't want to make an enemy of the viewers in their living rooms and have Congress glaring at me."
They were fighting under the assumption they would win.
Rather than thinking about how many of the enemy they could kill, they thought about how many allies they could keep alive.
The real-time battle status reports were only confirming what they already knew. To them, the mere act of receiving an irregular report was humiliating. This was not a clash between their plans and the enemy's plans. They had determined the entire schedule themselves. This was a superpower's war.
"Varsfork shouldn't be a problem, but Ilijinika Tunnel Shelter is a relic of the Cold War which was thought to be the final war between the US and Russia, right?"
"If everything is functioning properly, the civilians will be evacuated there. Although it won't be properly airtight since the internal filters and rubber seals will have deteriorated."
"No one is talking about using B or C here. We don't want to pay war reparations after they use humanitarian treaties as a shield. Are we prepared to break through with standard firepower?"
"How about we use an old relic too? I will prepare the 500mm heavy artillery."
"The Grad Killer, huh? It might be a fossil, but use it properly. It doesn't matter if the enemy fights back. We can't afford a delay if it jams."
Even here, they were simply obtaining vocal commitments from each other. The people viewing the strategic actions from above would never be ignorant of the firepower they had procured the budget for after negotiating with the pacifists while rubbing their hands and grinning. In the end, they were really only tossing around the ball of "responsibility" like a hot potato. They were only negotiating over who would have to take the blame if their one and only fear came true: human error on the part of one of their own soldiers.

“It is extremely low scale, but Kingdom F does seem to have an unidentified fighting force…”
“Hmph. What can some musty old knights do? Can they bring down a stealth bomber while drawing their bowstrings on horseback?”
Those normal soldiers were unfamiliar with the Summoning Ceremony and could not perceive anyone involved in it, so they were lucky to even know of a vague organization name. They saw no reason for concern there.
And that was why they remained ignorant until the threat took visible form before their eyes.
A moment later, a massive form shot past right next to the electronic information control plane.
It was a giant space station transformed into a blazing fireball by massive friction.
After flying so elegantly through the sky, the operation command room was shaken like a leaf in the wind. The ones who flipped over and hit their head on the corner of the desk could count themselves lucky. Some of the officers were slammed into the ceiling like they were caught in some turbulence.
Finally, the aircraft regained control.
They had all been thrown to the floor and soaked in the black coffee and single malt whisky they had been drinking. One of the high-ranking officers, who had never before tasted the floor, forced out a trembling voice while clinging to the table which was bolted to the floor.
“Wh-what…what happened…?”
And his well-trained subordinate gave an appropriate response even in this chaotic situation.
He saluted and spoke.
“It would appear that the war has begun, sir.”

Part 2

The Missing Princess was still back in Japan.
Due to the time difference, lunchtime was close to finishing there.
“Phew.”
Sinceria Highland, Queen of Kingdom F, used a handkerchief to wipe the sweat from her brow while her oddly long ears twitched.
There was only one reason why a vessel like her would have returned from her Material form.
“…Well, that should about do it.”
The Chain had ended.
After defeating more and more and more enemy summoners, she found several hours had passed. That was an extraordinarily long battle since the Artificial Sacred Ground could only last 10 minutes at the most, but all Sinceria did was use that handkerchief. Her cool-colored dress still looked like snow or ice, glass or crystal.
Her stamina as a vessel was abnormal.
The battle had begun on the side deck, but it had gradually drifted, leaving her on the casino floor now. The Illegal summoners and vessels were strewn about in the defeated state, some passed out on a broken roulette table and some convulsing with their head crashed into a slot machine. Stuffing a vessel head-first into the air conditioning vent designed to look like a fireplace may have been a mistake. The casino area was not being properly cooled.
The glasses knight named Rachel Wormwood tapped her shoulder with her Blood-Sign which had the silver rod and J-shaped end of a battle hook.
“These were no more than foreign threats and insults to our kingdom who were so obsessed with gathering the Awards before their eyes that they lost sight of their true purpose as a summoner and even failed to collect the very Awards they sought. They never stood a chance against us.”
“Rachel.”
“Yes?”
Sinceria clasped her hands in front of her large chest and gently smiled.
The unbelievably beautiful head of state in a cool blue dress cut to the heart of the issue.
“Was this unofficial investigation merely an excuse to distance me from the war?”
“…”

Rachel fell silent for a moment and then shook her head.
She seemed to resign herself to something as she opened her mouth once more.
“The foundation of Kingdom F will be established where our queen is located. As long as you are safe, we can rebuild the kingdom as many times as it takes. It was also fortunate that the nobody took the princess away.”
“That is a shocking thing to hear as Kingdom F’s last line of defense…”
“Real war is not fought solely through the Summoning Ceremony. In fact, a large army firing common bullets is more frightening. When you get down to it, war is supported by the three pillars of population, technology, and resources. Was that never explained to you during your close relationship with that nobody?”
Once she got that far, Rachel faced the head of state once more.
She kneeled before Sinceria and bowed her head.
She got down on one knee and kept her tall and athletically-fit body as low as she could.
But she did not hesitate to speak.
“I will offer up my treacherous head once Kingdom F has been rebuilt. There is no need for the likes of me in the coming age. Please expunge my name from the court records and place my head in the guillotine, my queen. There is only a common criminal before you. The knight named Rachel Wormwood never existed.”
“Don’t be ridiculous…”
Sinceria’s tone slowly changed.
This was likely a voice she could never use in front of her daughter.
“I’m sure this was a group decision by all of the knights. No, there was probably a petition from the people before that. So why must you pass it off as your independent decision and take the full blame yourself?”
Rachel’s shoulder’s jumped.
She fidgeted with her head still lowered.
“No, that is…not what happened. This was a foolish act planned only by the traitor before you…!!”
“You are a terrible liar and that is one of your virtues. Finding no words to speak is nothing to be ashamed of.”
Sinceria than added a “however”.
“What is good and what is evil? Who should be punished and who should be forgiven? As the sovereign ruler of the kingdom, we hold the right to pardon criminals. Lady Rachel Wormwood. It is true we have given you some authority as a knight, but I have a question for you here. *When did you gain the right to disrespect the entire divine right of kings*?”
“…”
Rachel clenched her teeth.
But she did not raise her head.
She clenched her teeth, clenched her teeth, clenched her teeth, and spoke in a vanishingly quiet voice.

“But if you were to graciously pardon me, it would mean I survived by sharing the special seat reserved for you. If I do not offer up my head, I will be setting a poor example for the others who allowed you to escape at great risk to their own li-…”
“Enough.”
She was rejected.
A regional knight’s pride could not bend the orders of a kingdom’s queen.
“You…no, the knights as a whole only prioritized my life because you heard the people’s pleas. If you still wish to be punished for your crime, then live on in disgrace, Lady Rachel Wormwood. Make up for not protecting the people, for abandoning the people, and for giving up on the people by ensuring this ends very differently from the result you imagine is coming. That is the punishment I will give to my trusted partner. Learn from your mistake and aim to be an even stronger strongest. We will use all of our authority as Kingdom F Queen Sinceria Highland to prevent you from shirking responsibility and accepting an easy death like a coward. Take this to heart, ignorant and proud knight. We will never listen to the likes of you and let you order us around.”
Silence followed.
What was burning in the trembling knight’s soul: the intense humiliation of losing her place to die, or appreciation for being saved from execution?
Rachel would snap at Shiroyama Kyousuke more than necessary whenever they met and she showed an intense revulsion to Sinceria’s idea that they were both summoners who protected the same royal family, but that may have been a sign of her jealousy. Kyousuke had looked far too bright as he fought head-on with nothing hidden and had that work in favor of Kingdom F’s royal family.
But that was none of Sinceria’s concern. She would look right past the #2 or #3 as she always sought the #1 summoner. If Rachel lived up to her queen’s expectations through ceaseless effort, Sinceria would have to do her very best to protect her subordinate.
There was no right answer in war, but you still had to make a decision.
If Sinceria had chosen to remain in Kingdom F and fight the foreign threat to the end, Rachel would have gone down in history as a fool who had stood by Sinceria’s side yet failed to get the head of state out of the country before they were surrounded. That knight had been stuck between a rock and a hard place from the beginning. And in the very, very end, she had chosen to listen to the will of the people, preserve the honor of the knights, save Sinceria’s life, and offer up her head and her head alone.
Sinceria smiled at that knight who had been raised to be honest to a fault and had thus *become perfect*.
If she were to rid herself of someone like this out of fear of damaging her own reputation, then Kingdom F would truly be done for. The monarchy would have to be dismantled.

“Worry not, Rachel. This will not end the way you fear it will. There was never any need to feel that regret burning within you. So relax and raise your head.”
“?”
“Have you forgotten? We are not the only ones working to resolve this.”
Sinceria had declared this issue over when she told Rachel to live on in disgrace.
So now it was time to encourage her #1 subordinate who was still trembling like a fawn.
“After all, my adorable daughter and the hero who saved our kingdom have teamed up. With Olivia and Kyousuke working together, how can this have anything but a happy ending?”
She raised her index finger.
And she made a definite statement with a gentle smile on her lips.
“Just you watch, Rachel. Kyousuke will undoubtedly save the entirety of Kingdom F, including you.”

Part 3

Let us step back to shortly before the crash landing.
Kyousuke had no further need for War Criminal who was also aboard the Toy Dream OP-01 space station. After stuffing him and his vessel in an emergency pod, he produced a sound much like a dry branch snapping.
“???”
Olivia tilted her head outside the pod.
“Onii-chan, what did you just do?”
“Nothing. It’s fine.”
Kyousuke answered the small girl while making sure she could not see inside as he closed the escape pod door to contain a liquid floating like red rubies in the zero-g space.
Now that he had settled an old conflict, they finally had to face the war.
Yes, the Silver Resource War was marching onward even without the mastermind behind it. The snowball had already started rolling down the hill.
Their objective had changed.
They had to stop the war itself.
Kyousuke pulled an Incense Grenade the size of a hair spray can from the rolled-up hood on the back of his hoodie.
Double blonde braided Olivia tilted her head.
“Huh? The one you keep there instead of your pocket is your final spare, isn’t it? So are you out after this?”
“To be honest, far too much has happened today.”
Even though he had calculated out the proper reentry angle, the giant space station was dyed orange as it was scorched by the atmosphere. Parts were peeled up and blown away from the extremities as the surface temperature reached around 3000 degrees at the highest. That was an incredible temperature since the melting point of iron was around 1600 degrees.
Locating the enemy was not that difficult.
An army division included around 10,000 people. With more than one division-class forces on the scene, their locations were immediately obvious when viewed from above. Approaching them on the flat surface would have been difficult, but they would never expect the vanguard to fall right on top of their heads.
A dull metallic sound came from Kyousuke’s hand.

It was a makeshift Incense Grenade launcher made by attaching a grip and other parts to a sliced-off piece of copper pipe with liquid fuel injected inside. It was blatantly handmade, but it provided enough force and it was using rocket fuel. The real hurdle had been preventing the explosive force from rupturing the pipe from within.
Kyousuke sat with his back pressed to the wall, stuffed the one remaining metal can inside the front of the barrel like he was placing a lid on it, and filled the chamber with the amount of liquid fuel he had measured out with a tube.
“Olivia, come here.”
“Right.”
Olivia approached, so he casually held her close just as there was a change to their apparent weight. They were tugged forward, their speed only continued to accelerate, and it never seemed to stop. Unlike when an apple fell to the ground, objects falling from orbit did not fall along a straight vertical line. It was better to think of them as spiraling as they were swallowed up by the earth’s gravity, so the angle of their fall would gradually shift from horizontal to vertical. So as Kyousuke and Olivia rode that intense roller coaster, the direction and magnitude of their *apparent gravity* was changing from one moment to the next.
They had already reached approximately 4 Gs, which was at the level of an actual roller coaster.
By the end, it surpassed 9.5 Gs, so the floor and the concept of up and down became meaningless. That was why Kyousuke had pressed his back against the wall and held small Olivia in place. He would have liked to have seatbelts or lap bars, but they were not enjoying a safe attraction here. They were approaching the battlefield on a space station that would fall apart on its own. Strapping themselves in for the duration would only mean committing suicide with the station.
“Nbh, ngweh.”
“You don’t have to hold back, Olivia. The contents of your stomach are being tugged on too, so nothing will come out no matter how much you gag.”
“Onii-…urp…I need to lecture you…later…!!”
<…Ni…sama…>
Some static crackled in the back of their minds.
The scorching atmosphere meant nothing. She could hitch a ride even at reentry speed.
Olivia went entirely pale.
“Th-th-that isn’t normal…”
“Hm, looks like I was right that she goes berserk in response to me being in danger. The enemy we seek is at Toy Dream OP-01’s destination.”
After they passed the obvious thermosphere, the sound of a giant file scraping at the outer walls only seemed to grow louder. The atmospheric pressure was growing and the density of impurities like air and dust was

increasing. The slight sense of deceleration as something pushed up at them may have been the air friction applying the brakes.
The space station’s angle was changing as it drew a gentle curve in its fall. The obstacle that Kyousuke and Olivia believed to be a wall had to be facing upwards like a ceiling when viewed from the surface.
“On your mark.”
Kyousuke spoke below his breath while holding Olivia’s small body.
He was as accurate as the hands of the clock attached to an accurate time bomb.
“10, 9, 8, 7, 6…”
The launcher made from a thick sliced copper pipe was aimed straight ahead.
In terms of earth’s gravity, it was aimed straight down toward the surface.
“…5, 4, 3, 2, 1.”
Something large passed right by the space station. No, it was Kyousuke and Olivia who passed right by the transport plane or bomber.
That caused them to shake side to side more than before, but Kyousuke did not bat an eye.
He spoke with his finger on the trigger.
“Zero. Let the battle begin.”
A cross-shaped crack ran through the “wall” in front of them.
Just as the orange-burnt anti-radiation aerospace material was stripped away by the wind pressure, Kyousuke aimed at the center of it all and fired his projectile.
It all happened in an instant. It was like quickly passing your palm horizontally through a candle’s flame. He acted too quickly for the heat to reach them. It looked like a reckless action at first, but it was actually the safest option.
The space station resembled a giant fireball and it did not actually crash into the surface.
The giant structure broke apart in midair and scattered, as if the entire thing was peeled apart from a single point. Thanks to that, the earth was spared an ice age.
After stripping away their grand raiment, Kyousuke and Olivia were pulled down by a different force.
The Incense Grenade had detonated after being fired toward the ground ahead of the station.
(There’s a division of 10,000 to the north and one to the west. The supply line, intel management, logistical support, and reserve forces probably amount to another 5000.)
Kyousuke and Olivia swiftly flew to the center of the Artificial Sacred Ground.
This direct descent should have been impossible for a human being with no space suit or parachute.

The golden land created by the dawn's light and the mist crawling across the surface was blown away in an instant. The bared battlefield had finally shown itself.
(This is the frontline base for attacking the Ilijinika Tunnel Shelter to the north. Good, it's all going according to plan. This is a 3.2 margin of error in landing coordinates, but that's within acceptable bounds.)
Overall, it was about 5km in each direction.
The vast plain's stability could not even be broken by the irregular flow of the rivers produced by the snow thawing on the tall mountains, but two field runways for giant transport planes intersected at a right angle and a 2km vehicle maintenance base was set up at the inner angle. A control tower and hangars for working on the transport planes themselves and unloading cargo were constructed on the outer edge of the runways.
Kyousuke and Olivia had descended to the vehicle maintenance base on the inner angle.
Kyousuke first placed his feet on a thin fragment travelling at a similar speed to establish the Artificial Sacred Ground around him. Then he fired a White Thorn to surround himself with a protective circle before landing on the ground. The station's fragment shattered and a new Artificial Sacred Ground appeared on the surface. Olivia's small feminine body had transformed into a thick slime.
There were four observation towers, a barracks, a communication command center, and a roofed maintenance bay larger than a school gym. Alice (with) Rabbit ignored all of them and instead focused on the vehicle management space filled with countless tanks, armored trucks, mobile rocket launchers, and more.
They were all deadly industrial products waiting impatiently for the cruise missiles and bombers to finish the preparations.
It was not flesh-and-blood humans who were operating those steel weapons. The soldiers wore Quad Motors Repliglass Snapping Turtles and the short and round armor completely eliminated any hint of a human silhouette.
Those military facility suppression devices could shrug off a point-blank barrage from a 30mm machinegun and, in addition to using firearms, used the two special machine arms on the shoulders to tear off a tank's hatch or a shelter's door – and the occasional leaked video of those being used against flesh-and-blood enemy soldiers or terrorists raised humanitarian concerns. Those demonic weapons perfectly fused the nimbleness of infantry with the toughness of tanks.
After the space station broke apart in midair, a single glass shard from the solar panels or a single screw had become a deadly weapon. Those would not be lethal to the American soldiers covered in thick Repliglass, but it would have normally required heading below a roof to protect themselves. However, no one did that.
And not because they trusted too much in the Snapping Turtles the military had issued them.

They could not take their eyes off of the grim reaper descending upon them without warning.
They did not know what *it* was, but they knew something bad would happen if they took their eyes off of *it*. The modern battlefield was like a video game in how it was ruled by the internet and mass-produced machines, but that baseless jinx eerily permeated and spread among them all.
And.
Kyousuke continued to calmly observe the industrial products lined up around him.
He could see why they were known as the world's most powerful army. And that meant he need not worry about killing them even if he used a Material against them.
(Okay.)
He was surrounded by the afterimages of the White Thorns that continued to ricochet wildly around him. The red light of the Petals was mixed in among them.
Meanwhile, his eyes had already picked out the most important parts of the scene around him.
(If they want to pry open the gate to Ilijinika and Kingdom F as a whole, generally scorching the mountainside with rockets and missiles would be meaningless. Bunker busters dropped from bombers would be equally useless. Then that roofed maintenance bay must contain a landmark weapon specially made for breaking into something like that. That would be the top priority.)
His enemy was the world's most powerful army and more than 25 thousand had been sent in for the first wave of the Silver Resource War.
And Shiroyama Kyousuke reigned at the center of the great fortress containing half that force.
"Now, then."
With the protective circle and Material, it did not matter how many guns and missiles were aimed at them.
Kyousuke gave a fierce smile while holding the best position for acquiring as many Petals as he wanted when he wanted.
"You've done nothing wrong, but it's time you took a nap."

Part 4

Now.
What does it mean to win a war?
Different people would think of different situations and phases: destroying the radar facilities and securing air superiority, cutting off the supply line and isolating the enemy troops, destroying the computers to prevent the enemy from approving their operations, etc. But Kyousuke decided none of those would work here. He wanted something more immediate. Given the difference in strength between the two sides, America would have put together a timetable where they completed their invasion of Kingdom F in just a day or two. Simply tripping them up a bit would only end with them forcing their way through the defensive line. Just like a freight train, a large nation could not be stopped by the average brakes once it had gotten moving. Sparks would fly from the wheels, but it would still plow through anything on the rails.
So…
“Let’s go, Olivia.”
<Okay, Onii-chan!!>
Olivia Highland had already given her body over to an abnormal being. She was a red translucent slime, one of the Original Series that was a necessary starting point no matter how the Material was built up. It had a Cost of 1 and belonged to the low Sound Range. It was the bottommost foundation and the weakest of the weak, but it still held great meaning.
First of all, Materials existed beyond human understanding and normal military might was useless against them.
This army may have been the strongest in the world, but that meant nothing to a resident of another world.
“That thing is hostile! I repeat, that thing is hostile!! We can fire!!”
“Don’t be stupid! If we fire into the center, we’ll just hit each other!! Arnold, ignore as much of what that inexperienced Captain says as we can without actually disobeying orders. We need to form our ranks first!!”
“Yes, sir. This is on you now. I’ll draw back the tanks since they’re too powerful and use the infantry to buy some time. After they’ve been fanned out, we can eliminate this thing with the combat vehicles. Get started.”
Tanks and armored trucks were lined up as neatly as the parking lot of a mall on the weekend, but those armored vehicles were trying to move gradually away from Kyousuke and Olivia. Infantry wearing thick Repliglass

appeared as they weaved their way through the gaps in that “moving wall” which would cause a disastrous scene if someone’s clothing got caught on one. They had likely sent in the Snapping Turtles because they could survive a direct hit from an autocannon or a grenade launcher. Instead of securing cover, they started by aiming their assault rifles at Kyousuke and the Original Red (b).
They provided no warning.
In fact, the red slime started it by tackling one Snapping Turtle that failed to escape and flipping over an armored truck by pushing up on it from below.
The endless ear-splitting popping noises were a lot like having all the firecrackers in Chinatown go off at once.
But those were no more than the back dancers that complemented the star dancing below the spotlight. The otherworldly Material and Kyousuke in his protective circle could not be harmed by normal bullets.
<Um, where should I aim in general?>
“Focus on the maintenance bay to the northeast. Destroy the landmark weapon being constructed inside.”
He gave her some quick instructions, but they did not head directly there.
A large force was already approaching them.
“Olivia, sweep away the 30 directly in front of us.”
<Right.>
“After that, take out the bazooka unit at four o’clock. Those are powerful enough for friendly fire to kill the Repliglass soldiers, so deal with them quickly.”
<You sure are nice, Onii-chan.>
They must have decided this was not going to end as things were because some Repliglass soldiers wielding heavy machine arms rushed directly in while receiving covering fire, but they could not get any closer to Kyousuke thanks to the protective circle. As the arms strained with effort, the Original Red controlled by Olivia crashed into the thick Repliglass’s sides and then followed Kyousuke’s instructions by charging into the group starting to use shoulder-fired anti-tank weaponry.
They could ignore the 10-minute restriction in this case.
After all, 10,000 people were crammed into a small space here. By opening the Artificial Sacred Ground based on one person, defeating them, and opening another one based on someone else during the 90 seconds of the Chain state, they could fight almost indefinitely. The strength of the built-up Material was carried over, so Kyousuke and Olivia’s advantage only grew.
Olivia’s form changed again and again.
A giant rotting dog crushed a group of four Repliglass soldiers along with their heavy machinegun fixed to the ground with a tripod.
A man-eating plant with countless blades instead of petals launched steel seeds with the force of bullets to neutralize the snipers lying atop the barracks roof.

A beautiful Western doll with round and fat maggots wriggling in the cracks covering its body slowly shifted its aim toward a soldier attempting to lend a shoulder to a Repliglass soldier who could not move due to a malfunction.
“…I guess not every member of the world’s most powerful army can be a veteran hero.”
<What do you mean?>
“It’s common for people to enlist because they need a job during a recession or for immigrants to enlist to contribute to society and gain the right to citizenship. Being the world’s most powerful army is another way of saying its soldiers die a lot less than other countries’. *They don’t send in their true elites without good reason.* I bet they leave the annoying groundwork to the rookies and the kind of machos seen in movies and games show up later for the part that gets their names in the history books. Because as long as they have Repliglass, even rookies can perform adequately.”
<…>
The silence contained a strained tension.
This was a war fought with just one hand and interspersed with yawns.
Although that was no solace for the people of Kingdom F.
Still, it was fortunate for Kyousuke who wanted to stop the war.
He heard a voice from a radio that had fallen at his feet.
“We have had some success with the losses still in the acceptable range. The vehicles have been moved into place. Lieutenant Stallone?”
“——————”
“Attention, everyone. We have lost contact with the Lieutenant. I will take command from here on. Fire!!”
The tanks and armored trucks had moved a certain distance away.
Tank guns and howitzers were fired though the newly-opened gap to hit Kyousuke and Olivia. The explosive booms were accompanied by filthy dust blossoming up like overlapping flowers. In addition to the simple blast and shockwave, a horizontal downpour of small metal balls and sharp fragments assaulted them. The storm of destruction filled the entire space, so it was well beyond the point that any kind of martial arts could hope to dodge it.
The blasts were occurring at such close range that orange sparks occasionally flew from the armor of the tanks themselves. Steel claws flying at supersonic speeds were wearing down the composite armor.
However…
“Olivia.”
With that one word, the cloud of dust was blown away from within and a great form stood upon the battlefield.
Divine-class. Cost: 8. Sound Range: Middle.
That giant being that looked down upon the cutting-edge tanks was a great black dog with three heads. It was the faithful guard dog of the underworld in Greek Mythology whose original Greek name began with a K. The orange sparks spilling from the gaps in its violently uneven teeth were reminiscent of the heat at the depths of the earth.

Its great size caused the Artificial Sacred Ground to expand outwards so that it now contained the tanks which had supposedly fallen back.
Before beginning its fierce attack, it howled once toward the heavens. The tanks were controlled by an electronic network, yet they still froze in place for just a moment.
“He might seem frightening since he belongs to the underworld, but he’s no more than a guard dog. It’s true he shows no mercy to those that try to break the rules and crawl out of that land of the dead, but that isn’t all.”
And.
Kyousuke rested his Blood-Sign on his shoulder and used his other hand to point at the group of targets.
“He will never allow the living to wander blindly into the underworld and needlessly forfeit their lives. He’s a kind guard dog.”
There was no hesitation whatsoever.
Whose lives was that guardian of death protecting: Kingdom F which was relying on it, or the US Army which was opposing it?
They shared the one body, but the three heads roared at each other in competition as the giant guard dog charged in at the helpless tanks. Before the treads could dig into the ground, a mass of composite armor was held down from above and had its gun grabbed and yanked off by giant jaws. The soldiers inside were now exposed, so they stared blankly up at their enemy. They did not have time to hurriedly don their Repliglass.
As soon as the stolen tank gun was chomped through like an aluminum can, they raised both their hands even though no one had ordered them to.
That was the end of the damage wrought by the three-headed guard dog. It moved on to its next target without devouring the flesh-and-blood humans who had lost the will to fight.
“Olivia, attack at three o’clock.”
A tank next to the one turned into a convertible was aiming its gun at the Divine-class. If the shell exploded, it would harm their own exposed allies, but they apparently were too panicked to think it through that far.
The guard dog’s giant foreleg dropped down and bent the entire tank gun at a right angle before it could fire.
When she shell was launched, the tank itself was pushed backwards. The explosion opened the gun barrel like a flower, so that one had been knocked out of the fight.
After a short break, Kyousuke raised his Blood-Sign once more and used White Thorns to gather Petals. Olivia changed form a few times before he settled on a Cost 8 from the middle Sound Range. It was a giant from Mayan Mythology whose 8-letter name began with C and referred to earthquakes. That colossus began kicking the tanks around like soccer balls.
Why was Kyousuke meaninglessly building up the Material?
The Original Series at the very bottom would be enough to simply “defeat” this enemy, so he had to have some other reason for building it up like this.

Reaching the Divine-class required summoning 100 Regulation-classes.
Reaching the Unexplored-class required summoning 50 Divine-classes.
So what was Kyousuke aiming for?
(Here we go.)
“Olivia, focus on the sky overhead! Cruise missiles are being fired on Kingdom F. We can’t target them with the Artificial Sacred Ground since they’re unmanned, but they’re top priority targets!!”
Unexplored-class. Cost: 19. Sound Range: Middle.
The Lady of “Purple Lightning” that Separates Good from Evil (iu – ao – eu – ei – kub – miq – a – ci – pl).
A sickly-thin beautiful woman sat in a battered wheelchair. Her purple hair blew in the wind, her unhealthily skinny naked body only had some purple cloths halfheartedly wrapped around it, and she was as limp as a doll someone had tossed aside. But her power was undeniably real. Her head was still hanging down, but a withered branch of an arm was lifted just enough for the slender index finger to point into the empty air.
A dreadful purple beam shot out and that sword of light accurately sliced through the four cruise missiles using GPS to carry explosives at Mach 1.9.
Materials normally could not leave the Artificial Sacred Ground, but projectiles could pass right through its walls. To deal with aerial explosives flying overhead, it was fastest to summon a Material that specialized in ranged attacks.
When it rang directly in Kyousuke’s head, Olivia’s voice contained an impatience separate from that overwhelming accomplishment.
<Is the Phase 1 information attack over, so they’ve started the Phase 2 bombing? Th-there really will be victims now!!>
“That’s why we’re stopping it. Warning to ten o’clock. Altitude: 25 thousand meters. The drones flying there *have babies*. Shoot them down before they can drop the bombs in their bellies.”
As he had pointed out before, they could not contain unmanned weapons in an Artificial Sacred Ground. But they could destroy anything that existed outside of Alice (with) Rabbit’s no-killing rule.
…The most frightening nightmare scenario was to be left alone in a deserted location, being attacked with countless missiles and rockets from 3 or 4 kilometers away while unable to use an Incense Grenade, and have the explosive blast fill the entire area. Summoners and vessels could be killed by normal firepower if it was used correctly. That was why the veteran warriors like Kyousuke and Biondetta did not take normal soldiers lightly. That fact had permeated them to the bone since it had been normal people managing the children in the Queen’s Miniature Garden located deep underground.
Riding down on the space station had not been a meaningless performance. As a summoner, the center of the most populated area was the one safe area where he could keep the Artificial Sacred Ground and protective circle

going as he fought. If he had tried to reach the center along the surface, he would have been shredded into mincemeat in an empty field.
The Lady of Purple Lightning specialized in surefire projectile attacks. There was no need to approach their top priority target.
“Olivia, the northeast maintenance bay! Slice it apart!!”
<Will do!>
The roofed maintenance bay was larger than a school gym, yet it crumbled before their eyes.
But not from the Lady of Purple Lightning’s attack.
Something had broken out from within before the shutter covering the one wall could fully open. A gigantic mass of steel rolled out from the rubble.
The giant gun barrel looked like a steel bridge and far surpassed the category of mobile artillery. The fortress cannon had been forcibly loaded onto a 32-wheeled special transport vehicle meant to carry 7000ton frigates at shipyards.
“The Grad Killer 500mm heavy cannon, huh?”
<What’s that?>
“It’s a large weapon that fires special liquid container shells into the bedrock to intentionally cause a deep-seated landslide and destroy natural fortresses. A deep-seated landslide is normally a largescale landslide caused by underground water veins, but that thing shapes that liquid into a shell and injects it into the ground. Mountains can be structured in a number of ways, but the Grad Killer can destroy any of them.”
To put it another way, it took an environment surrounded by mountains for the weapon to display its power.
It was not an easy weapon to utilize, but weapons were always designed and refined for the convenience of those who would use them. An island nation surrounded by ocean would develop its navy, while a desert nation surrounded by sand would develop its army.
And a look back in history showed a time when the US and the Soviets were staring each other down with enough intensity to destroy the world.
It was not that surprising to find an outlandish weapon had been designed for use in Eastern Europe in order to pry open the Warsaw defenses and directly reach Moscow via a European route separate from the Alaskan route.
However.
Its appearance only sped things up.
Shiroyama Kyousuke spoke two simple words.
“Do it.”
It took just one attack.
The Lady of Purple Lightning lowered her skyward-pointed finger of destruction and aimed toward the surface.
It did not matter if this weapon used 500mm shells which were even larger than those used by a battleship’s guns. That movement was all it took for

the mass of steel to be sliced through like a boiled egg pressed against a taut wire.
It ended far too easily.
But Olivia Highland sounded concerned despite having done most of the work herself.
<But how is this supposed to *end it*, Onii-chan?>
“Don’t worry.”
<We’re in the north, but there was another big unit along the western route, right? We’ve already used our last Incense Grenade. If we travel across the empty space between units, the Artificial Sacred Ground will disappear after 10 minutes. And wait. Aren’t they supposed to have another 5000 troops in reserve!?>
The destruction was already complete.
When the Lady of Purple Lightning pointed her finger at the remaining enemy forces, the Repliglass soldiers must have decided their tanks and armored trucks would not function as shields because they scrambled out of them. They raised their trembling hands in surrender.
<And that’s not even the main point. Even if we do defeat the full 25,000 in this first battle, it won’t defeat the superpower beyond the sea. The Grad Killer? Destroying that extraordinary landmark weapon doesn’t change a thing. Defeat the first wave and they’ll just send in a second and a third. And they’ll only respond with even greater force once we’ve damaged their pride! This might end the battle, but that’s not the same as ending the war!!
>
“Good girl, Olivia. So you do understand. *That’s why the wind is blowing in our favor.*”
Olivia’s voice ground to a halt.
For some reason, she had the lady in the wheelchair turn to face Kyousuke and aim her slender finger toward the summoner. Even the US soldiers poking their heads out of their convertible-ized tank tilted their head in confusion.
<…Say what?>
“Calm yourself down, Olivia. This isn’t Normandy or Stalingrad during World War Two. Nor is it the swamps of Vietnam. No one in the world wants this to develop into a head-on battle where blood is paid for with blood.”
Kyousuke gave a thin smile.
The boy who had defeated even a revenge demon did not hesitate to speak.
“This is a war that a superpower started under the assumption that it would be a 100-to-0 perfect game. That alters the victory conditions into something quite unique.”

Part 5

The chaos was at the northern fortress.
But the other frontline base to the west was silent and ignored.
“…What are they doing?” muttered a large black man with a plethora of medals decorating his chest.
His large glove of a hand slapped and rubbed his head which he kept shaved in a habit he had picked up when he was a new recruit.
Yes, the distant western front had also received reports of the spontaneous battle.
That Colonel had been left in charge of the great force meant to pry open the western gate, but he did not immediately send reinforcements when the terrified reports arrived. But not because he was too reliant on doing things “by the book” to make a decision. There was a bigger problem.
“Sir,” said his saluting Asian aide. “This will not end well if the rookies who viewed this deployment like a field trip have snapped under the pressure of live fire.”
“An explosive outbreak of PTSD and soldiers gone berserk under the influence of mass hysteria…”
Everyone in the command room grimaced, but they were missing some fundamental information.
They knew a battle had broken out in the makeshift base of the company to the north.
But that battle was centered on a summoner and vessel.
And normal people would forget about such supernatural beings as soon as they were out of sight.
Now.
Given those conditions, what did the world look like to them?
Here is the answer.
They knew their distant allies were fighting.
But they could not at all see who those allies were fighting against.
“Attacking each other and creating unnecessary victims within the fortress? Those fools. And they expect us to share responsibility!?”
“There do seem to be some witness accounts of something like a ghost.”
“You want to send that report back home? They’ll question our mental health.”
“Others are saying they are fighting mythological gods. And it seems like everyone there can see them.”

“Shut up!! Curse those part-timers who grabbed a gun to earn a stable income. Did the fear and confusion of that space station falling on their heads cause them to lose all control!?”
The conversation continued while unclear whether they were on the same page or not.
This was what it meant for a summoner and vessel to drop into the center of a large army and slip into the crowd of soldiers. Even the soldiers standing side by side and directly fighting some kind of strange enemy gave contradictory witness reports. And even if the fragmentary reports that miraculously survived were patched together, it would only lead to the nonsensical idea of fighting against ghosts or gods.
Of course, those reports were not the only source of information. The large black man and the others waiting in the west viewed the chaotic northern division using satellites and drones. But the summoner and Material inside an Artificial Sacred Ground could not be seen with cameras or sensors. They had vague witness reports and hard proof of nothing there.
Of course they were going to doubt the sanity of the other group.
“~ ~ ~”
Whatever the case, their timetable had fallen apart.
Even if the cruise missiles, rockets, and bombers of Phase 2 completed on schedule, they could not continue past that. This was a devastating blow to their ground forces. And unfortunately, technology had not reached the point that wars could be ended with only aerial bombings. The ground forces were needed to declare checkmate by attacking the remaining forces hiding among the rubble.
Also…
“There has been some difficulty with Phase 2 as well. The cruise missiles were lost for no apparent reason. It happened to every last one of them, so I doubt it was a mere accident. We are speculating that the northern unit’s anti-air weaponry was used.”
“Ugh.”
“And we only have satellite imagery to go on, but the Grad Killer that forcibly causes deep-seated landslides appears to have been damaged beyond repair. How this has happened is a complete mystery, but won’t it be difficult to pry open the tunnel shelter? Bunker busters are not suited to the terrain conditions.”
“Ohhhhhhhhh!!”
The large black man shouted futilely.
They could not move things forward without first dealing with those idiots.
The Asian aide remained at attention.
“If the entire division of 10,000 has gone berserk, that is more than 40% of our forces rendered unusable. Thus, we can claim our overall force has been routed. How about that?”
“How about what…?”

In war, it was not after every last soldier had been killed that a force of 25,000 was considered defeated. It differed between militaries and units, but once between 30% and 50% had been taken out, the entire army would withdraw because they could no longer accomplish what they had set out to do.

“We could attempt to suppress them, but if we head north and get into a fight, we might be lumped in with them as an uncontrollable force. So couldn’t we leave them be and withdraw?”

To be blunt, the US Army’s enemy was not Kingdom F.

In this backcountry war, victory was assumed and defeat was unthinkable. Rather than thinking about how many enemies they could kill, they thought about how little damage they could take while ending the war according to their timetable. That was the logic of a powerful nation’s war.

Their biggest fear was the living rooms across the US mainland.

It could be the number of young new recruits who died while deployed overseas. It could be mysterious health problems caused by chemical substances. It could be psychological problems like PTSD brought on by a variety of pressures. If a war cameraman snapped a photo of those social problems and it spread across the internet, intense anti-war protests would begin across the US mainland. This was an age where the chemical fertilizers used by farmers were criticized because they could be used to make bombs. And now this was happening to the high school and college graduates who had excitedly rushed to a foreign land so they could legally fire big guns. If a newscaster displayed a line graph of the tragedy befalling those youths, the politicians would realize how this would affect their approval ratings and the war would fall apart before the military’s eyes.

This was meant to be a deathless perfect game that would be over in a day or two, but now 10,000 of their troops had gone berserk and it could devolve into a shootout between allies. If word of that nonsense got out, they would receive an onslaught of criticism from the civilians with too much time on their hands.

When the alternative was holding a war of words with the made-in-America housewives whose self-consciousness had been fattened to the limit, starting World War Three with those brown bear bastards fueled by vodka did not sound so bad. They were a formidable foe, but they understood the rules of the battlefield.

(…It’s all over…)

In the end, there was no threat of the world being split between east and west. Losing here would not allow anyone to trample all over the United States and it would not get their families and lovers killed back home. They were not facing a precipice. And that may have been why the large black man and the others did not give this their absolute all. In a game of chicken without a cliff, you could slam on the brakes at any time.

Would they wash their hands of the berserk unit and withdraw, or would they stop the berserk unit despite the danger of misunderstandings?

The large black man slapped the back of his head with his glove-like hand.
“…Relay this to the troops: Those bastards still haven’t taken the pacifiers out of their mouths, so let’s slap them upside the head and wake them up.”
“Colonel.”
“It would be easy to abandon the berserk unit and prove we’re still of sound mind. But if they drag the locals into this and there are victims, we’ll be criticized for not stopping them when we could! *It doesn’t matter if these are the people of Kingdom F we’re talking about!! Killing as a strategic action in accordance with a plan is entirely different from killing as a chaotic and barbaric act!!*”
“…”
“If it comes to that, it’ll be more than just the liberals in Congress criticizing us. What about Free Feather, the war bereaved families association? No, this goes beyond just one country. The UN General Assembly which includes more than 180 nations and regions will start talking about war crimes and crimes against humanity! If it gets that bad, any groundwork we laid will be null and void. And if they can claim they’re protecting civilians from the berserk unit, Russia might get involved. I don’t care if World War Three breaks out here, but I will not let it happen with us as the villains!!”
“Sir, I marvel at your foresight. Now, what are your real motivations?”
“I’ve already bought a farm in Colorado to live out my old age in retirement. Hunting in the forest, fly fishing in the river, golf all day long, and even a natural hot spring. It will be a private paradise for me and my family!! I spent ages slowly building up to that dream, so I would rather die than have it taken from me by throwing me into Guantanamo just to pacify the TV viewers in their living rooms. I’ve paid my dues to our nation and I’ve followed every last rule since I was a new recruit. It wasn’t easy having a shootout with my own brothers in arms when they disobeyed orders and attacked a jewelry store after we secured that desert nation. So why does my career have to end with some idiots going nuts and getting me thrown into a cell smaller than a phone booth where I only get beans and salt soup to eat!?”
They made a swift decision.
The western division, who were safe here but found their futures at risk, took action.
“Haul out everything we have!! Including the land SDI…yes, the carbon gas laser!!”
“Isn’t that the landmark weapon meant to pry open the western gate?”
“It would only get in the way when we withdraw. If we start breaking it down and loading the pieces on transport planes now, we would never make it in time. We’ll scrap it on site and incinerate it until it can’t be captured and analyzed. They’ll be mad as hell if we report we abandoned it, *so make sure we use this confusion to properly dispose of that bulky weapon.* Okay, let’s go!!”

Destroying a large mass of technology would earn them a harsh scolding, but if a weapon was damaged in the fighting and they disposed of it so that it could not be analyzed, they would actually be praised or it.
The aide breathed a somewhat exasperated sigh.
The life of an upstart required some clever solutions at times, but this young man had not enlisted to see this.
“Sir. Won’t your very outdoorsy hobbies not sit well with your wannabe New Yorker of a wife?”
“Drop the ‘wannabe’ next time, boy. And don’t worry. I’ll give her a tablet with an Amalon Premiere account. She’ll be able to shop and watch videos as much as she wants.”

Part 6

“Here they come.”
Once they reached the Unexplored-class, there was no need to build up the Material any further. Kyousuke stuck with the Lady of Purple Lightning while resting his Blood-Sign on his shoulder and looking to the massive cloud of dust covering the horizon.
North and west.
The two divisions had been deployed far apart, but that just meant he had to get them to come to him.
“Olivia, the other half have arrived. Crush them and our war is over.”
<Nweh? But I only see a few armored trucks here and there.>
“They’re sending some scouts in first and a larger group will follow. They should send a few sets of 500 to a 1000.”
Kyousuke was right.
The few armored trucks were followed by a horizontal line of tanks that looked like a wall of steel. They did not even use the hills as cover. There were probably troop transport trucks loaded with Repliglass soldiers behind them. Prioritizing personnel over equipment may have been an American trait since they wanted to minimize casualties and avoid criticism from the TV viewers. If those had been Russian troops, there may have been infantry clinging to the outside of the tanks as they charged from the front line.
“If we crush them too, the *bizarre reports* will continue and they won’t be able to escape the suspicions of mass hysteria, but the TV viewers will soon boil over with anger and criticize the White House for starting this war.”
<Onii-chan, won’t Rachel slap you for fighting by stripping your opponent of their honor?>
The youth had been deployed on what was supposed to be the world’s safest war, yet they had been harmed. This was not what they had signed up for.
…It looked silly spelled out like that, but that was how a superpower with absolute strength viewed war.
Because they were the strongest, they were unaccustomed to losing.
Or rather, they did not know how to accept defeat.
<I could shoot them now if it doesn’t have to be super precise.>
“Draw them forward some more. The closer the two units, the better for us.
…Oh, so now it’s a giant laser cannon? If they’ve brought out the west division’s crucial weapon, they must be ready to withdraw, no matter what the higher ups might think.”

The tanks without turrets may have been collection trucks meant to retrieve broken vehicles. Four of them were being used to pull a giant flatcar like a horse-drawn carriage. Instead of a canopy, it carried a cylindrical cannon enclosed within a boxy metal tower. The weapon was intended to intercept missiles from space, so that was likely meant to reinforce it so it did not bend within earth's gravity.
<Onii-chan, I didn't realize you liked painting models with dirt and camouflage.>
"2000 meters. Yes, this should be good."
Tank guns generally aimed in a straight line, but 2km was close range for them. They had approached so close because they were sick of the confusing reports coming from the satellites and drones and they wanted to check things out for themselves.
That might sound silly for an age of digital warfare, but there was a report saying a temperature of just two degrees higher than their body temperature would lower infantry's attentiveness. And if they were inattentive, it increased the risk of stepping on a landmine or tripwire. That was the state of the incomplete digital warfare that had not fully eliminated humans from the battlefield. There was no avoiding the emotions that had been a part of war since BCE times.
No matter how many reinforcements were sent in, Kyousuke and Olivia only had to keep doing the same thing.
The protective circle and the Lady of Purple Lightning would not allow normal bullets or shells to harm them. Without Princess Olivia's extremely precise control over the Unexplored-class, it would have actually been harder to avoid killing the enemy. Their one concern was that they had already used up their last Incense Grenade. That meant they had to protect the Artificial Sacred Ground they already had. If the enemy was scattered over too wide an area to reach them during the 90s Chain, this would get a lot trickier.
It was risky and they were walking on thin ice.
If the Artificial Sacred Ground vanished, Kyousuke and Olivia would return to being vulnerable humans who could lose their lives to common bullets and explosions.
Between two battles, Kyousuke spoke while stepping on a tank shell that rolled out of a supply truck.
"We've pretty much settled things here, so let's go crush the reinforcements."
<But the Chain only lasts 90 seconds! And they're about 2 kilometers away!>
"It's time to join civilization, Olivia. We don't need to go on foot."
Kyousuke sharply jabbed his Blood-Sign at something on the ground.
He detonated the tank shell he was stepping on.
The close-range blast was not a problem thanks to the protective circle. And the rules of the Summoning Ceremony stated that the Artificial Sacred

Ground’s base surface was the surface on which the Incense Grenade detonated, but if that surface was broken and destroyed, it would instead be based on the surface stood on by the summoner who had thrown the Incense Grenade.
Kyousuke was propelled upwards by the blast and flew more than 10m straight up. He flipped himself upside down so the soles of his feet touched something while pointed skyward.
They touched the bottom of a large transport plane that had approached surprisingly close. It seemed to have been trying to land on the field runway because it was low on fuel, but it must have given up upon seeing how large the battle on the ground had grown. Kyousuke designated its belly as the next foothold while it cruised at fairly low altitude.
The feeling of landing must have been different while seated in a wheelchair because Olivia screamed while existing within the Lady of Purple Lightning.
<Wah!?>
“If this is one of the new C-1092s, it uses electronic control support when landing, so it can fly at more than 300km/h even with its wheels out. It’ll carry us those 2000m in just 20 or 30 seconds.”
With that, Kyousuke ran upside-down along the bottom of the fuselage to reach the front.
The Chain was still in effect, but to set the next foothold on the ground, they would need to destroy the old one…which meant the transport plane. That was why he moved to the front, circled around the round nose, and looked through the thick reinforce glass at the pilot who looked so shocked he was about to have a heart attack.
Kyousuke viewed the pilot.
And after confirming the next 10 minutes had begun, he smashed the glass canopy with the tip of his Blood-Sign. The protective circle was in the way, so he used the end of the long stick to snag the military uniform’s collar.
“Olivia, destroy the plane.”
<You may be the strongest pacifist, Onii-chan, but all of your ideas are insane.>
With that exasperated comment, a purple beam sliced the transport plane apart.
Kyousuke carried the screaming pilot with him as they returned to the surface. He set foot in the center of the western tank unit sent in to suppress the mysterious riot.
They were outside the base.
It was a flat, featureless plain, making it a poor location for taking on tanks.
But Kyousuke shook the pilot (who had gone quiet after his eyes rolled back in his head) from his Blood-Sign and winked.
He sounded like he was reading off the warnings in a user’s manual.
“Sorry about starting with an Unexplored-class right off the bat. Even an expert would cry foul at that, but you’re the world’s strongest. I’m praying you’ll find a way to escape this.”

It only took an instant.
The sickly woman in the rickety wheelchair launched a purple beam from her fingertip.
Kyousuke thought about the state of the battle while watching as the tanks were sliced apart to leave just the soldiers behind. It was like a magic trick.
<Is that big thing our top priority?>
“They aren’t even trying to preserve it, so they’re probably planning to abandon it here. Still, destroy it just to be safe.”
The lasers fired by the giant strategic weapon and the Unexplored-class collided, but the result had been obvious from the beginning. No matter how much firepower that thing boasted, physical methods of harm could not even scratch the protective circle or Material.
With the north and west landmark weapons destroyed and Kyousuke right in the middle of the tank reinforcements, it was clear what would become of the Silver Resource War.
After thoroughly cleaning things up here and letting their mistaken view of the situation work to its fullest, it would no longer be feasible to continue that economic activity known as war.
If it became known that 20,000 soldiers had succumbed to mass hysteria and destroyed each other, the higher ups in charge of those promising youths would undoubtedly be asked to take responsibility. And international society would be hesitant to let such dangerous units enter their borders or pass through their territorial waters. In the worst case, every last unit would have to keep a motherly school counselor or fortune teller with them at all times.
<But, Onii-chan, isn’t Government the world police? They must have a lot of subordinate groups in America, so wouldn’t some professional summoners and vessels have been deployed with the troops?>
“Some were.”
Kyousuke readily confirmed it and Olivia fell silent again.
Only her impatience and confusion reached Kyousuke’s mind.
<Wait, but, that’s bad! If our plan is to trick the world because they won’t remember us, we can’t have any professionals on the battlefield *who can actually see what’s going on*!!>
“The ignorant TV viewers will still be angry, so it won’t change anything. I mean, the truth of the matter is that a single summoner and vessel pair defeated the world’s most powerful army and a being greater than the gods went on a rampage. …What good would it do for the military officials and IT company presidents to explain that at a press conference? People would think a mysterious war disease had spread to the US mainland and they’d be sent to a mental hospital.”
<…>
“It doesn’t matter whether or not the truth is known. We need to focus on how many people will believe it.”

<Onii-chan, I need to have Rachel give you a spanking. She'll whip you into shape at our training ground.>
That was a frightening threat, so Kyousuke made a mental note to give her some candy later to placate her. As tiny as she was, she was a member of the royal family and could be particular about her food, so he would have be careful.
"Would this be a job for the forbidden chocolate chip cereal? It's hard to judge that one since it's taken a step outside the category of food, but it is overflowing with an immediate charm…"
<Onii-chan? Hm? What are you analyzing now???>
Had they finally identified the threat now that it was right in front of them? Or were they still utterly confused because a single boy could not account for all of the damage? Either way, Kyousuke wanted to defeat them before they could recover, so he did not wait around. He wanted to end this before they came up with the *actual right answer*: have all of the US soldiers fall back and attack endlessly with drone bombings and cruise missiles. Just like with food and ammunition, depriving your opponent of time had long been used as an extremely effective method of applying pressure.
The boy snapped his fingers.
"Olivia, it's time to end it."
However.
That was when an unexpected voice burned into the back of his mind.
<…Nii-sama…are you there…?>
He felt a pressure in his heart.
This was the one thing that not even Shiroyama Kyousuke had been able to predict. After all, this was the Unexplored-class who had directly killed the White Queen and been broken by it. Her childishness, purity, and obedience made this monster far too different.
There was only one thing he knew.
She had suddenly appeared during his battle with War Criminal and destroyed the Artificial Sacred Ground with the touch of her fingertip. Regardless of the summoner and vessel's skill, the Third Summoning Ceremony simply could not last until the conclusion when she was involved.
(Why now…!? If she had waited just a bit longer, we could have fully neutralized both US divisions!!)
He of course had no more Incense Grenades.
If this final Artificial Sacred Ground was taken from them, that was the end for Kyousuke and Olivia. Their momentum would grind to a halt and the stalled car would never start up again. The tension he felt now was far different from before.
Olivia's voice was trembling too.
<O-O-Onii…chan…>
The environment that allowed her to use the Unexplored-class strength of the Lady of Purple Lightning could end at any second.
There was only one possible key to overcoming this.

“A summoner and a vessel…”
<?>
“Government summoners and vessels must have been unofficially sent here with the American troops. If there’s a way out of this, it has to be that.”

Part 7

And.
A group was secretly waiting in a forest at the midpoint between west and north where no pieces were thought to have been placed on the map.
It was only 50 strong. That was about the size of a platoon or two, but the coordinator who knew the truth of the Kingdom F knights knew it was nowhere near enough. The US military was composed of four branches – the army, navy, air force, and marines – but they were woefully unable to prepare anyone capable of directly using the Summoning Ceremony. That was why the summoners and vessels cooperated as mercenaries who were not counted on paper. America had always led the world in its 300 years of history, but that short history also left it weak when it came to the mystical and the occult.
25 pairs had been gathered to fill that mystical gap.
One of the pairs was Government Award 501, Perfect Game.
The summoner was Max Layard, a macho man with a pompadour. The vessel was Ellie Slide, a small brown girl with bright swimsuit tan lines.
“G-god this is dangerous. He’s reached the Unexplored-class while we just watch. Ahh, ahh. And the Grad Killer and Land SDI landmark weapons have both been destroyed. At this rate, he really will crush both 10,000-man divisions.”
“Now, we still haven’t received any instructions from the coordinator, but what should we do about this?”
“I’m not about to guess what that Alice (with) Rabbit is thinking, but he’s beating up people who’ve never even heard of the Summoning Ceremony. I’m still not fond of what the American military or monster corporations do, but this is different. Attacking without explaining the rules just ain’t fair!!”
“So…what? Are you going to charge in shirtless and wielding a Gatling gun like a Hollywood hero? He already has the Lady of Purple Lightning of the Unexplored-class, but are you going to take him on with a Cost 1 Regulation-class, Max?”
“……
……Okay, I’m sorry. So what are we supposed to do, miss?”
American culture taught you never to apologize, even if you hit a child with an 18-wheeler, but the incense expert with glasses and a bare midriff liked Max’s break from that. An idiot who knew they were an idiot was better

than someone who had been so spoiled by their parents that they were convinced they were a genius.
The girl in a large witch hat carried a Native American ritual item taller than she was that looked like a cross between a single-edged axe and a tobacco pipe, but she currently had it stabbed into the ground so she leaned her small butt against it through her miniskirt and shorts.
“He might be Freedom Award 903, but Shiroyama Kyousuke is still human. Have you forgotten that he was affected by my incense during the Pandemonium incident? If a direct attack won’t work, then we just have to be sneakier about it. Don’t underestimate a witch’s secret techniques. If we can destroy the Artificial Sacred Ground and remove his protective circle, I can burn some incense smoke and send his brain to a world of illusion.”
“(That’s as cheap a trick as the gloomy rabbit bastard.)”
“Max. Who is it that is kiiiindly soothing the pain from your front teeth since you were throwing a childish tantrum over your fear of visiting a foreign dentist? If you doubt a witch’s secret techniques, I can respect your wishes and end that before heading home.”
“Yes, ma’am. I have no objections whatsoever, you sexy lady in glasses, blonde hair, and brown skin!!”
“Good.”
The girl with a height of less than 140cm gave a snort from her small nose. The dreamcatcher hanging from her neck did not budge from her sadly flat chest.
The age of feminine superiority may have arrived.
That girl possessed a fusion of the techniques developed by the Native American tribes and the witches who had fled to the New World, so what meaning did she find in this Eastern European forest? In a process incorporating Native American asceticism, Ellie Slide had piercings in her navel, her tongue, and even below her clothing. At the moment, she took a deep breath.
“Let’s get started. Let’s take up a position upwind and send in some Incense while keeping enough distance that Shiroyama Kyousuke won’t notice our presence. We came here to do a job and we can’t refuse to fight just because we think we can’t win. We need to achieve the results we were paid for.”
However, Max did not respond.
He was the man who had not hesitated to punch his supervisor because he could not allow a tropical village to be sacrificed for a superpower to further its plans. No matter what he said, he may have been questioning the invasion of Kingdom F. Or did he think he could apply the brakes at the right point if he was involved? He was an idiot, but his was an idiocy Ellie never got tired of seeing. Claiming both Kyousuke and the US Army were oppressive was a fair argument, but making an enemy of both sides would only isolate yourself. That man was amusingly ignorant.
Or so she thought, but that was apparently not the case here.

Max wobbled on his feet and then collapsed to the side.
“Hello, young lady. Care to lend a hand with your incense expertise?”
Despite the silly tone, the presence directly behind Ellie Slide was like a drawn blade. Nothing was pressing against her windpipe or heart, but if she moved, she would be cut down. This warrior had honed their skills until their killer intent alone served as a warning. Ellie considered a few options, but they would all be too slow. She would be killed before the incense could take effect.
Unable to turn around, she asked a question.
“…Who are you?”
“You can call me Biondetta or Freedom Award 920, Liar Cat.”
This could not be worse.
She had even more Awards than Shiroyama Kyousuke.
Ellie heard the quiet rustling of leaves at her feet and looked down to see something approaching her from where Max had collapsed.
A white snake slithered between the legs of that young girl with bright tan lines.
And Ellie belatedly realized that the area was too quiet. The others in the forest had also been secretly knocked out. Presumably so they would not get in Shiroyama Kyousuke’s way.
“I agree 100% that there is no need to challenge a powerful enemy head on. So I won’t bother throwing an Incense Grenade. Because this adorable little thing can sneak up to the target and use its fangs to send venom swiftly coursing through their veins.”
“I live with rattlesnakes in the New World, so I’m familiar with snakes. The pattern is hard to tell since that one is albino, but I doubt that is a venomous variety.”
“Then how do you explain the people who have collapsed? Surely you aren’t going to suggest it was the placebo effect.”
With a sound much like rustling cloth, a damp sensation slithered up her leg. And not figuratively. After passing between her legs, the mystery white snake coiled around Ellie Slide’s brown right leg and slowly climbed that healthy bare leg.
Its tongue moved in and out.
It showed off its mysterious fangs.
“*Did you replace its fangs?* So people would assume it was harmless and let their guard down before it injects them with whatever chemical you’ve decided to place inside it?”
“Oh? I wouldn’t have thought someone with a piercing *here* would take issue with extensions and implants. I’ve replaced half my body with artificial bone, so it doesn’t really bother me.”
The white snake passed the girl’s knee and reached her thigh.
The carrier of a powerful venom seemed to tilt its head while in position to bite at the center of Ellie Slide’s body past her miniskirt and shorts.

“You knocked Max out immediately, but you didn’t with me. What do you want from me?”
“I’m glad to see you understand. And speaking of that…Max was it? That summoner also functions as a hostage, so keep that in mind. If you do as I say, I’ll swap in the antidote cartridge and have my girl bite him again.”
“…”
“Or are you going to rely on your witch’s skill to attempt mixing an antidote? That would be tricky. First of all, this is a super rare chemical with very few samples to come by.”
Ellie Slide shut her eyes behind her glasses.
She let go of the combination of an axe and pipe and slowly raised her hands.
Without opening her eyes, the young witch breathed a heavy sigh and spoke in a low voice.
“…I am going to murder Shiroyama Kyousuke.”
“Yes, thank you. Now, it would seem you are only pretending to surrender to put me at ease, but drawing out the conversation long enough for an incense to take effect won’t work on me. I take so many antibiotics and other things on a daily basis that the inside of my body is a complete mess. Both poisons and medicines aren’t going to function normally.”
The person seemed to have casually circled in front of Ellie Slide.
When Ellie opened her eyes again, she saw a waitress demon with sexy proportions and long hair dyed pink. She got down to business with a sticky smile on her face.
“You’ve made a name for yourself with your incense expertise, so I would like for you to create an Incense Grenade for my client, Shiroyama Kyousuke. Right this instant.”
“I remember his basic composition from the Pandemonium incident, but what exactly does he want it for? He’s asking for help from a former enemy. I doubt he would accept the risk of sabotage if he only wanted to resupply his *normal Incense Grenades*.”
“I do not know what he wants it for.”
Ellie’s summoner partner was at risk of dying, but the waitress’s behavior was completely irresponsible.

“I was given two jobs by my client. One, to sneak into the American summoner unit that had to be here for the Silver Resource War and trip them up from within if a battle broke out. And two, approach the Perfect Game pair, which he knew would almost certainly be here thanks to information from a Government intermediary, and get Incense Expert Ellie Slide’s help if a battle broke out. How exactly I went about these jobs was up to me, so do not blame my poor, adorable client.”
“…I cannot stand how much those boobs are jiggling. How about I fill them with holes to criticize your methods here?”
“Squish squish☆”
To show off the overwhelming difference in bust size, the smiling waitress demon brought her loosely-clenched fists together at face height and used her arms to press in on her breasts from both sides.
“*He wants you to take a look at the scene and create the perfect cocktail for the occasion*. As dangerous as it is, he has no choice but to rely on your skill which your average incense maker could never hope to match. And that leads us to the present. So work hard for your beloved Max☆”

Part 8

<…Nii-sama…>
The noise was awful.
Each time that “voice” sounded in Kyousuke’s head, it felt like the wiring of his brain was being fried piece by piece.
<…Nii-sama…>
The limit was approaching. He could tell.
The Artificial Sacred Ground was already straining and it felt as unreliable as a suspension bridge on the verge of snapping. Meanwhile, Kyousuke worked to finish things.
“Olivia!! Blow away as many of the remaining tanks as you can! Right now!!”
The young woman in a rickety wheelchair made quick movements of her fingers like she was performing a mudra. Purple light sliced across the scenery in a straight line. To follow Alice (with) Rabbit’s methods, it skillfully avoided the human bodies while slicing apart the Repliglass armor and tank armor panels. It was reminiscent of the die cutting game played with hardened sugar at festivals. The dance of destruction was so powerful that it was a miracle the entire thing did not shatter.
The enemy had been defeated.
That should have been the end of it.
But sweat poured from not just Kyousuke’s face but his entire body. He knew this was only the beginning and that the true battle had yet to begin.
He did not hesitate.
<Nii-sama.>
The staticky voice grew much clearer.
The air split open vertically and a young hand broke through.
With a deafening noise, a being from another world once more appeared in this one. Met with the screams of the world itself, the ephemeral girl’s full body appeared. And that changed the phenomena that came with her.
Unexplored-class. Cost: 21. Sound Range: None.
The Colorless Little Girl Dedicated to a Single Goal (aie – a – oio – ei – ueo – ioa – e – uai – ee).
That honest, pure, obedient, and insane girl would not play games like the White Queen.
She would destroy everything with her very first move.

“Ooooooooaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhh hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!”
Her appearance pushed the Artificial Sacred Ground past its limit, so Shiroyama Kyousuke could not stop it from bursting like an overinflated balloon.
With that special power gone, he and Olivia were merely human.
If she swung her right hand, the boy would die. If she then swung her left hand, the girl would die. That was the only possible result while exposed like this.
“Hello, sir. Your delivery has arrived☆”
Which was why they were so fortunate to hear the jocular tone of a demon who had snuck up to them at some point.
Of all the cards he had prepared, this was the very last one he had wanted to draw. Given the situation, not even he had known whether this would arrive in time. The slightest coincidence could have kept it from working.
But she had in fact arrived.
Biondetta Shiroyama threw an Incense Grenade so it detonated precisely when the Artificial Sacred Ground ruptured. It fused with that bursting Artificial Sacred Ground, changing its nature.
Biondetta had thrown it, and not even she could escape it. She was blasted toward the center.
Out of habit, she started pulling out her silver Blood-Sign that looked like a collapsible rifle, but Kyousuke just barely saved her life by shouting at her.
“Don’t pull it out!! Protective circle or no protective circle, you can’t block the Colorless Little Girl’s attacks. Using a Material will only make you stand out!!”
“Tch. So I have to run around this enclosed Artificial Sacred Ground without anything to protect me? I see, I see. So that’s how much you trust my abilities. But how about some advance warning next time, sirrrrrr!?”
He would of course never ask anyone other than Biondetta to do this.
Even the weakest Cost 1 Regulation-class could unilaterally kill a Repliglass soldier.
On the other hand.
Olivia had precise enough control over her Material that there was no fear of friendly fire. And while the Colorless Little Girl’s destructive power was incredible, she was only focused on Kyousuke.
…A summoner of Biondetta’s caliber had a chance of surviving this. As long as she could cleanly fit herself inside a psychological blind spot.
That let Kyousuke focus on the enemy in front of him.
He would use the chance Biondetta had given him to make sure she did not have to die.
“…Ha ha. I finally have a chance at winning.”
In other words, he had an Artificial Sacred Ground that could withstand the Colorless Little Girl’s presence.

“Olivia! Just a little longer! We can protect Kingdom F here…no, protect the world!!”
<That sounds fantastic, but how about you explain what’s going on!? Even if we can actually fight against her, can we win with this Unexplored-class? She’s the assassin who easily killed the White Queen!>
Normally, it would not be possible.
Not even using all of the Three would be enough to deliver a finishing blow to the Colorless Little Girl.
However…
“The Colorless Little Girl keeps appearing in an unnatural state.”
<Nweh?>
“She isn’t relying on an Incense Grenade and she isn’t supported by an Artificial Sacred Ground or the Petals. She smashed the White Queen who could distort the world’s laws like a black hole, so you could write this off as her being able to do anything, but this gives a simple solution. *She’s been summoned in a twisted way, so we only have to resummon her in the proper way.* If we trap her in an Artificial Sacred Ground that won’t be destroyed by her appearance, she should be drawn back into the other world when the 10-minute limit arrives and the Artificial Sacred Ground disappears.”
Ghosts like the one known as the Rainy Girl were spirits of the dead who got caught somewhere and could not leave the world properly, so they could be eliminated by throwing an Incense Grenade and correcting things.
It was like they stood on a wire mesh floor.
In the Colorless Little Girl’s case, it was not the location or environment causing the problem. Her presence was simply so great that she could not fit through the normal holes in that wire mesh. When she appeared, she forced those holes open from the other world and pushed her body through, but since she saw no need to leave this world, she closed up and strengthened those holes so she could remain standing there without her feet slipping through.
She was cheating.
But once they understood that, they could fight back.
They would not allow the holes in the wire mesh to be widened and tightened. They would return them to the normal size. The wire mesh would likely be too weak and would break. Just like a black hole distorted space around it, the Colorless Little Girl would be caught in the borderline surrounding her and fall back to the other world. And once she had fully returned to the other world, they just had to repair the broken wire mesh. Ellie Slide’s incense could accomplish that.
So they just had to outlast.
It was only 10 minutes. A mere 10 minutes. This brief showdown only required enduring the Colorless Little Girl’s fierce attacks which made an instant feel like an eternity.
Even if they could not deliver a finishing blow here, they could at least get through the day.

Biondetta began shaking her hands inside the same Artificial Sacred Ground.
“U-u-umm… You seem to have some kind of master plan here, but I can’t do anything. I mean, you’re the one that ordered me not to summon a Material, sir!!”
“Don’t worry. I’m not expecting anything from you.”
“…That pisses me off too. Is that any way to treat someone who saved your life by getting you this Artificial Sacred Ground? It seems my naughty little brother doesn’t know how to say ‘thank you’ and ‘sorry’, so perhaps he needs a spanking later.”
<Hey, Onii-chan. I’m still not sure who this person is, but the world really is doomed if a demon is the voice of reason…>
A special Incense Grenade, a special Artificial Sacred Ground, a special Unexplored-class, and special combat rules.
This was a new kind of battle that differed from the Third Age ruled by the White Queen.
“Now, how about we get started, Colorless Little Girl?”
Something swished through the air.
The boy made a statement while lifting the Blood-Sign from his shoulder and pointing it at the enemy dead ahead of him.
“Time for the Fourth Summoning Ceremony that we *ended up* creating!!”

Part 9

The win condition was surviving for a set period of time.
To reiterate yet again, none of the Unexplored-classes they could summon could directly defeat the Colorless Little Girl.
The wheelchair woman used her unsteady finger to fire a purple beam in a horizontal sweep toward the Colorless Little Girl's skinny neck.
<That. Nii-sama. In the way.>
"Ooooooaaaahhhh!!"
The purple beam was deflected upwards and away from the Colorless Little Girl.
No, it was broken.
The Lady of Purple Lightening's withered branch of a right arm was broken, that is.
The bones from her wrist to elbow were snapped at a right angle. The vessel's scream rang in Kyousuke's head.

(That single-shot attack style is the high Sound Range, so we need a low Sound Range Material!!)
Just before the collision, Kyousuke rearranged the letters to achieve a new Unexplored-class. It was a gracefully beautiful woman wearing a red kimono and swimsuit. She had two horns on her forehead and her long hair was endlessly stretched out in a group of gears reminiscent of the world's fate. It was said she would determine the fate of all she gazed upon if she opened her coolly shut eyes.
Unexplored-class. One of the Three. Cost: 20. Sound Range: Low.
The "Red-Eyed" Lady who Sees Through all Sin and Calamity (fa – ao – ab – ei – fj – cib – b – du – a – eif).
"Sorry!!"
<Isn't it a little late for that…?>
A voice that was clearly not Olivia's responded with an independent thought and statement. What Ellie Slide had made was not so much an Incense Grenade as a small-scale Box.
As the insects approached like a black flood, the Red Lady merely swung her large sleeve out like she was dancing. That was enough for the roach swarm's perfect angle to shift. It was like redirecting a tank shell with angled armor. And she did not stop there. At some point, she had opened the eyelids that functioned as a seal. That was a sinister ill omen. The Red Lady accurately viewed something and thrust her hand out toward the roach swarm once more.
With a wet popping sound, a portion of that world destruction was annihilated. Countless wings, legs, and bodily fluids thick with glittering exoskeletons scattered everywhere.
Of course, the Red Lady was not unscathed herself. After touching that ultimate source of infection, her kimono sleeve melted away and her fingertips grew purple and dissolved until the white bone was visible. The fact that she could not feel the pain was proof of how powerful the infection was.
<Uehhhh!? G-gross…!!>
<Innocent vessel, please remain silent. And Shiroyama Kyousuke, it does not seem I alone can carry you through this.>
"I'm aware…of that!!"
The greatest merit of the Summoning Ceremony was that the god providing their protection could be swapped out instantly.
Kyousuke accurately acquired more Petals while watching the Colorless Little Girl toss several more bookmarks behind her.
Unexplored-class. One of the Three. Cost: 18. Sound Range: Middle.
The Wicked "Green" Woman who Fills the World with Empty Treasure (lu – o – np – e – qo – ei – r – k – a – rum – pl).
<Ee hee hee. You sure about this?>
Short wavy hair glittered like an emerald. She had the upper body of a young girl and the lower body of a great sinister serpent. Rusted swords

and scepters that symbolized the patriarchy formed a giant who was down on all fours. A different peak sat atop that giant.
<This vessel has that same virginal scent as that loathsome red goody-goody, but what I do is lay evil eggs. She might just experience something unexpected.>
That disrespectful mouth came to a stop.
Two ends of the world arrived at once. Two of the books behind the Colorless Little Girl devoured the bookmarks and released brightly-colored torrents on either side of her. One was a spatial distortion cannon created by giving directionality to an artificial black hole and firing it in a straight line. The other was God Hazard One, in which the entrails of slaughtered gods lost sight of their original purpose and attacked humanity.
The two forms of ruin approached from either side like a giant pair of scissors cutting through the world.
<Deflect.>
But after a series of dull sounds, the Wicked Green Woman pierced her own snake body with several swords and scepters. The wounds bubbled up and then giant soap bubbles separated off from them.
They were like snowdomes with immoral scenes contained inside.
When they contacted the approaching disasters like balloon bombs, they burst and scattered “never-before-seen forms of immorality”. It could be a strange bomb, a sweet chemical formula, or a gang that no one could capture. When the concepts of ruin and immorality collided, the deadly trajectories were slightly diverted and the end of the world swept past above Kyousuke and the others’ heads.
<N-nwohhhhh… Ngwehhhhh… Th-there’s something stirring in the middle of my body…>
<Ah ha ha!! I guess a mammal wouldn’t be able to accurately interpret the feeling of laying eggs. Not even the most experienced woman ever feels that, so count yourself lucky you get to enjoy it while still a virgin☆>
The Colorless Little Girl’s long skirt squirmed. That collection of weapons had blown away the Lady of Purple Lightning with a single shotgun blast.
Seeing that, Kyousuke chose his next hand with the Petals he had earned with his White Thorns.
Unexplored-class. One of the Three. Cost: 16. Sound Range: High.
The Spirit of Fluttering “Yellow” Gills that Rules the Heavens (s – a – so – voz – tix – ei – yw – za).
A yellow-haired girl sat on a crescent moon bed while wearing pajamas that resembled an oriental Taoist outfit. But the bed she rested in had the most bizarre shape, as if every last kind of living creature had been molded like clay and stuffed into it.
<…Don’t wake me up. What a pain. You have to know how much I hate anything that disturbs my slumber…>
“Unfortunately, I’m not about to go easy on anyone who survived in the depths of the Queen’s Miniature Garden. Everyone who fought honorably

there is dead. The only survivors – myself included – are those who offered up some kind of sacrifice.”
(Since I’ve been focused on strengthening our defense with the rock-paper-scissors Sound Range for each attack, the Cost keeps dropping! Damn, is the Colorless Little Girl guiding me…!?)
The direct line of fire did not matter.
Each of the projectiles fired from the many weapons that composed the Colorless Little Girl’s long skirt bent away at impossible angles. Or was it the people watching it who failed to perceive it properly? She was a psychological warfare specialist who fought by dragging her opponent into a dream.
Something grew from the normal ground.
It was the Colorless Little Girl herself. But not just one of her. There were two, five, ten…no, even more. The Yellow Gills gave herself more pawns as carelessly as weeds that grew up on their own.
<…>
The White Queen’s killer was surrounded by her own face.
But she did not let it bother her.
Her entire long skirt spread out like an umbrella and the weapons began firing in all directions. With deafening noises and blinding flashes, giant holes blossomed in the scenery that was modeled after reality. And with no concern for the many Colorless Little Girls between her and the border of the world. Once that holey world reached its limit, it shattered like glass.
The Yellow Gills looked annoyed that her opponent had used physical destruction in a mental world.
<Tch. You don’t have to wake me up with all that noise. So showing you some doppelgangers doesn’t trigger a malfunction in your raison d’etre? Mass-producing White Queens or Shiroyama Kyousukes might have been a better decoy.>
“What happened to Olivia?”
<She wasn’t ready to sync with me, so she’s too busy fighting the sleepiness to talk. Silly, isn’t it? Reality is no more than a material used to build dreams.>
The Yellow Gills smiled thinly, but a dark-red and sticky liquid flowed from the corner of her mouth.
Without creating confusion in that mental world, she could not dodge the Colorless Little Girl’s attacks.
<…Cough. She has the strength to do this even with the Sound Range working against her. And unlike those weapons, she herself doesn’t belong to a Sound Range. This Unexplored-class you made is pretty good.>
“Sorry.”
<Your life is just one regret after another, isn’t it? I said reality is a material to build dreams, but it still needs some upkeep. Going to sleep next to that thing wouldn’t be much fun at all.>
He swung his Blood-Sign and switched to yet another Unexplored-class.

It felt like someone was using a black hole to infinitely stretch out each minute and each second. Feeling that much pressure made Kyousuke wonder how the White Queen had felt while facing the Colorless Little Girl.
He had a feeling that White had smiled at the very, very end.
She had been happy to see how thoroughly he had studied her.
“Three minutes left! I am measuring the time with multiple types of clock, so it must be accurate! Sir!!”
“…”
Kyousuke calmed his breathing when he heard Biondetta who was also inside the Artificial Sacred Ground.
Three minutes.
That was more than he had thought.
<…Onii-cha-…>
“Just a bit more, Olivia!! Don’t let the Yellow Gills’ sleepiness stick with you!!”
He knew that was asking too much of her, but that was all he could do at the moment.
Vessels had their fight just like summoners had theirs.
Simply using the Three was not enough. He helped her endure the Colorless Little Girl’s fierce attacks by summoning more and more Unexplored-classes: the Ashen Shrine Maiden, the Liquefying Rainbow, the Gray Mollusk, etc.
Unexplored-class. Cost: 18. Sound Range: Middle.
The Dry-Grass-Colored Dancer who Returns Twice the Roaring Flames (zb – ei – sd – wp – e – be – xu – a – kk – pl).
At the moment, Olivia resided within a girl who had a slender silhouette and latte-colored hair. The only things she wore were a makeshift skirt and chest covering made of dry grass and a dry flower necklace that decorated her chest. The dry grass scattered around her as she danced, but it was all fuel to be ignited. She never released any fire of her own. Her alluring dance drew her opponent’s attack, she just barely danced out of the way, and the fire user was hit with a thorough counterattack.
However…
<Gah!?>
“Olivia!!”
Even Kyousuke cried out without thinking when he saw a short spear pierce her near the heart where the Silhouette was.
This Unexplored-class specialized in counterattacks and he had hoped that would buy some time, but it had not worked at all. The dry flower necklace decorating the Dry-Grass-Colored Dancer’s flat chest was shredded and scattered by the sharp blade.
Kyousuke immediately began collecting more red Petals to summon another Material, but then he clicked his tongue. He had been gathering the Petals in such an unbalanced way that he was running somewhat short.

He needed a full set of vowels to spell an Unexplored-class's name, so he would have to resupply with a new Rose.
That meant a time loss of a few seconds.
But the Dry-Grass-Colored Dancer could not move and the Colorless Little Girl pressed her slender hand against her. An eerie light slowly flashed within that hand like a clione. With a straining sound, that light twisted around and transformed into a strange arrowhead.
He would not make it in time.
Olivia would be killed.
"…!!"
As time stretched out infinitely, Kyousuke realized there was an option available that he had been subconsciously avoiding.
Unexplored-class. Cost: 21. Sound Range: None.
The "White" Queen who Wields the Sword of Unsullied Truth (iu – nu – fb – a – wuh – ei –kx – eu – pl – vjz).
Of course he had not used her.
Of course he had not relied on her.
But the Colorless Little Girl was a Material created for the express purpose of killing the White Queen. He did not have to entrust himself to her. He only had to use her and throw her out. Bringing the White Queen here would be the greatest bait for the Colorless Little Girl. And even if she had failed to defeat the Colorless Little Girl, the White Queen had lasted a fairly long time.
Why had he not done that?
Had he chosen to sacrifice everything to preserve his own puny pride?
An ignorant person in some corner of the world had to have thought it:
"If only someone with overwhelming power would take away this vague anxiety."
The powerful people who knew the origins of the Silver Resource War had to have thought it:
"If only the Unexplored-class known as the strongest of the strongest was by my side."
Even the knights constructing the line of defense meant to protect Kingdom F's people and land had to have hoped for it:
"If only we could fight alongside the White Queen!!"
Just give up.
Your personal preference does not matter.
Simply search for the optimal solution and you will find it.
What do you need to resist the Colorless Little Girl?
It might not be enough to defeat her. But if you summon the target she was designed to destroy, she is sure to strike there first. That will create a distortion in that pure strongest and it might lead to a large enough opening to find a way out of this. So compromise. It's fine as long as you're just using her as bait. Anyone in the world would tell you it's the right answer.
And.

And.
And.
“…”
Shiroyama Kyousuke clenched his teeth hard enough he thought they would break.
He made his decision.
The boy moved in between the Colorless Little Girl and the Dry-Grass-Colored Dancer controlled by Olivia.
The clione-like orange light…
…mercilessly smashed Kyousuke’s protective circle.
<Onii-chan!?>
Kyousuke bent backwards and realized he now had nothing to protect him.
Two Materials clashed inside the Artificial Sacred Ground, but his one defense had been pierced, shattered, torn away, and *broken*.
A single hit would be fatal.
Even a stray shot from Olivia would mean instant death.
And yet he was smiling.
He had heard Olivia’s voice and that meant he had successfully diverted the attack. The obstacle in the way had kept the Colorless Little Girl’s attack from hitting the Dry-Grass-Colored Dancer controlled by the vessel. There was a precedent for this. Boy A’s vessel had intentionally sacrificed one of her wings to protect her summoner.
No matter how risky it was, buying a few seconds gave him another chance.
The White Thorns ricocheted around and knocked the Petals into the Spots until a new Rose appeared in the center of the Artificial Sacred Ground.
Now he could summon any Unexplored-class he wanted.
So what should he summon?
What Material would shake the Colorless Little Girl and change the state of the battle?
The normal Unexplored-classes were not enough and the Three had not worked.
No matter how much he tried to reject it, a certain color flashed in the back of his mind.
White.
The frightening Queen symbolized by that color.
But.
However.
“I won’t…”
The thick presence of death approached to within a hair’s breadth away.
The pressure might have crushed a normal person’s heart, but Kyousuke definitely said it.
He spoke directly to the Colorless Girl.
“I won’t rely on the White Queen.”
<Nii-sama?>
“I’m sorry, Colorless Little Girl.”

Hearing that, she silently tilted her head with her palm still held out toward him.
The broken little girl may not have known what he was saying to her. She may not have been able to comprehend the unreasonable situation she found herself in.
Yes.
She had done nothing wrong.
She had been made at someone else's convenience, she had killed at someone else's convenience, and she had broken at no one's convenience.
It did not mater how much of a threat she was, how much incredible power she had, how much she distorted the world around her, and how much chaos she brought to people.
All of those were Shiroyama Kyousuke's issues.
They could not be used to criticize the Colorless Little Girl who wandered the world without an objective.
"…I don't care how difficult it will be or how crazy it is to try."
He had no protective circle.
And that was why he approached death just like death was approaching him.
He gently touched the Colorless Little Girl's cheek with his empty hand.
<Protect Nii-sama. Nii-sama…>
"I will save you. I swear it. Listen. Remember this one thing: I will never abandon you. You haven't done anything wrong and you're only lost, so I will grab your hand and return everything to normal. I swear it!!"
She looked puzzled.
She mechanically stared at his face using the emotionless eyes half hidden behind her bangs and then she slowly opened her lips.
<I…>
"…"
<I don't want that.>
Her rusted throat moved.
She spoke a series of words other than "Nii-sama" in a way that others could understand.
<If those words would make you suffer. If those words would bind you. And if you could not escape those words.>
Thinking back, the Colorless Little Girl's actions had always had the same motivation: protect Shiroyama Kyousuke.
But her targeting was broken, so she may have shot him in the back as she did so.
So that monster had only one answer to the boy.
<I will not ask you to *help me*. If it would only make you suffer, then I won't ask to be saved.>
Kyousuke breathed a heavy sigh.
He had not even considered this possibility. It was the worst of the worst case scenarios.

This girl was strong.
On a different level than Kyousuke or the White Queen.
For Alice (with) Rabbit, this was a more tragic ending than having his own heart ripped out.
Someone needed saving, but they refused to say the words “help me”.
It was the worst ending Shiroyama Kyousuke knew of.
He had worked so hard to make sure this would not happen. He had sometimes used straightforward methods and sometimes used more deceitful methods to gain the authorization of the Alices standing by his side even if it meant half forcing the words out of them. Biondetta had said it was him who wanted to save the girls and not the girls who wanted saving. She had speculated that was his form of insanity. She had been exactly right. The truth of the matter was Shiroyama Kyousuke was weak. *He could not bear to see someone else’s tragedy through to the end.* When reading a picture book of The Little Match Girl or A Dog of Flanders, he could not flip to the end of the story and he would close the book partway through. And despite not seeing the end for himself, he would act like he knew what he was talking about when he said the tragic end was wrong and he could handle it better himself.
So.
So.
So.
He could not just step back when someone said he was not needed. He could not be satisfied when someone said they would descend into hell for his sake. Shiroyama Kyousuke was afraid. He did not help people because he was strong. He could not accept the alternative because he was weak. The tragic picture book was about to the turn the page to the climax and he could not bear to watch. His heart would not last unless he found some way of slamming the book shut before reaching the end.
He had found what she wanted.
And she had not given him authorization.
But what did that matter? The extremely selfish and childish part of him was throwing a tantrum. That was supposed to only be a rite of passage to maintain his self-consciousness. Binding himself with his own rules and losing sight of why they existed was the height of folly. Of course, the mature and rational part of him understood. Forcing unwanted salvation on someone would be wrong. It was the same as a *jidaigeki* samurai storming into the governor’s mansion and slaughtering everyone he saw there. He would only be spreading around the kind of damage no one had asked for. The process had been necessary. It was a safety never meant to be removed. Given what his actions had caused when he tried to save the Queen in the Queen’s Miniature Garden, it was clearly an ironclad rule he could never forget even for a moment.
But.
Was there no cure for being a fool?

“…Then.”
He finally forced it out.
The part of the strongest boy that was not the strongest spat out the words.
“Then I’ll do it myself. I don’t care if it violates my rules or causes my soul to rot away. I will save you!!!!!!”

Part 10

Immediately afterwards, the world broke.

Part 11

That was not a figure of speech or just from the boy's point of view.
It was hopelessly physical.
"No fair…"
There was a voice.
But it did not belong to the Colorless Little Girl. Nor did it belong to Olivia who he was contracted with. It was purer and more sinister. It was hopelessly beautiful and hopelessly ugly. It was a repulsive voice from the depths of the earth that covered Shiroyama Kyousuke's entire body with goose bumps.
"No fair…"
Thinking back, could the Colorless Little Girl really have supported her existence in this world without a vessel, an Artificial Sacred Ground, or the Petals? While it may not have explained everything, wouldn't there have been some kind of structure supporting her existence here?
And.
When that being had been killed in Houbi Village, she had been working with Kyousuke in the guise of the artificial vessel named Meinokawa Aoi.
That had gone beyond her appearance. Despite being a Material, she had been able to play the role of a vessel.
So it was not impossible.
That being could have the Colorless Little Girl reside within her.
No one could say that kind of cheating was beyond the pure white's ability!!
"You never said that when it was me…!!!!!"
An impossible scene played out in front of Kyousuke.
The Colorless Little Girl's undeveloped chest split vertically open.

There was no blood or anything else. And it did not matter that her body had been transparent. Ten fingers grabbed the right and left edges and something peered out from the deep, deep darkness within like someone spying out of a cracked door.
This may have been the first time ever that there was none of her crazed love to be found there.
There was nothing else mixed in. She unleashed pure hatred in her words.
“…!?”
It all fell apart.
A hand in a pure white glove shot out of the wound in the Colorless Little Girl’s chest. At this close range, there was no way he could dodge or defend. Even if he had still had the protective circle, there would have been no escaping this attack.
An instant seemed to stretch out infinitely as he tried to come up with something he could do.
Kyousuke had only one option.
He formed a gun with his fingers and aimed it at the Unexplored-class that was his vessel.
“Olivia…I’m ending the contract!!!!!!”
<Wha-!? Ah, Onii-chan!?>
This was the greatest and strongest attack from the White Queen. Its force might just affect his contracted vessel as well and he had to prioritize that over the sturdy body of the Dry-Grass-Colored Dancer.
So he severed it.
Kyousuke and Olivia truly became mere humans.
And then.
Without mercy.
The White Queen’s right arm was absorbed straight toward Shiroyama Kyousuke’s heart.

Facts

- The Colorless Little Girl’s only objective was to protect Kyousuke. Thus, she refused to say “help me” to him because that would have bound him unnecessarily.
- Kyousuke steeled himself to rescue the Colorless Little Girl even if it meant abandoning his pride as Alice (with) Rabbit.
- They did succeed in forcing the US Army to withdraw from the Silver Resource War.
- The Colorless Little Girl’s independent actions were supported by the White Queen acting as a vessel.
- With nothing to protect him, Shiroyama Kyousuke was hit by the White Queen’s attack of hatred.

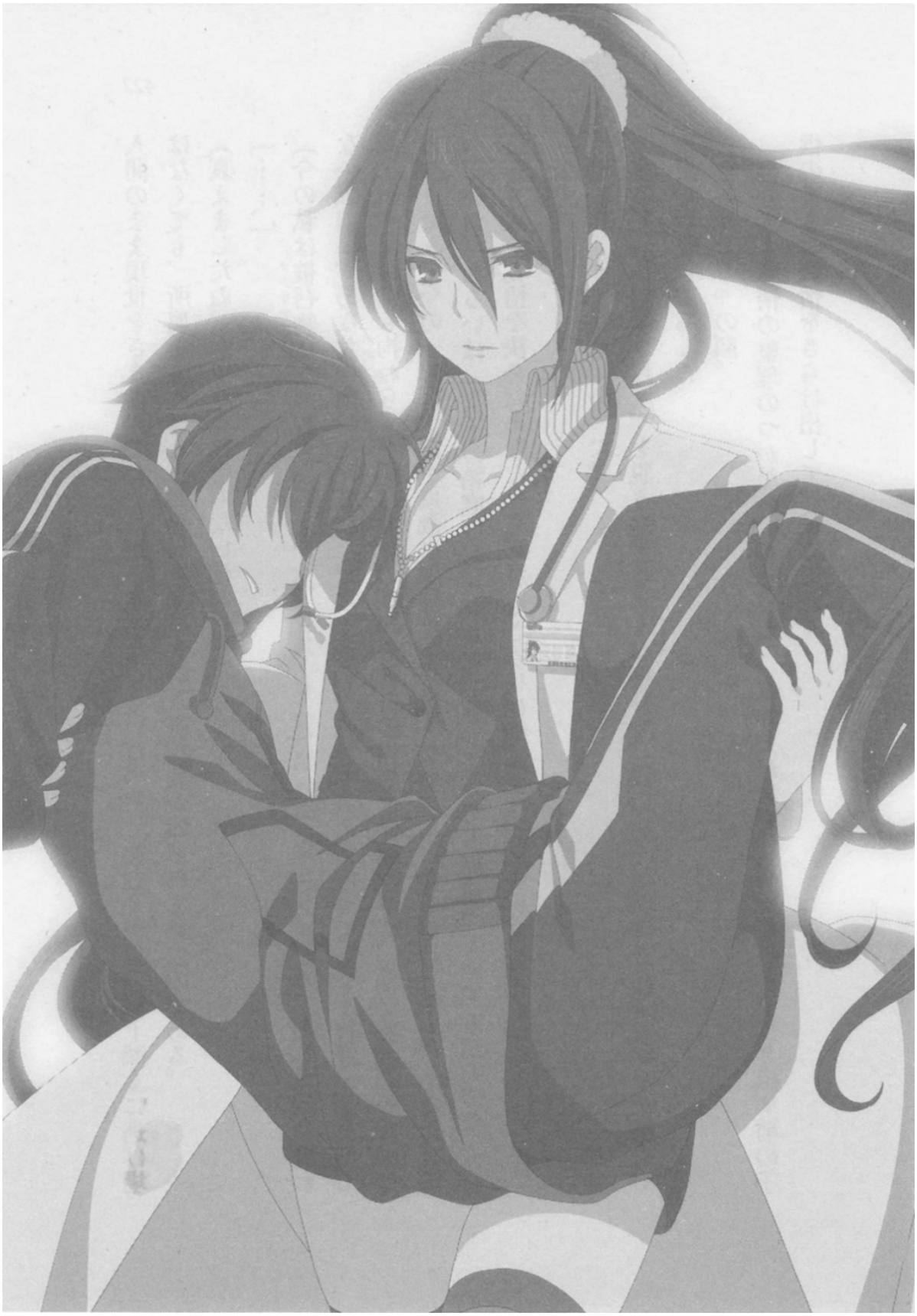
Ending X-01: Do Not Underestimate Youth

“You are weak.”
“Right now, you are like a hedgehog sticking out all its needles in fear of an unseen enemy.”
(Ending X-01 Open 08/04 07:20 “UTC+03 Flanguild time”)
Do Not Underestimate Youth

I really, really, really didn’t plan on it this time.
But I ended up making an appearance anyway.

“Pant, pant, paaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaant!!”

Perhaps because the Silhouette supporting her at the core had shifted out of place, the Colorless Little Girl grew as motionless as an empty shell. Someone gasped for breath deep within the vertical crack in her flat chest that seemed to lead into another dimension.
What kind of feelings were roiling within the White Queen's chest now that she had laid a hand on her beloved? Whatever the result, she could not change what she had done. She had been driven by a twisted love before, but she had just broken again.
She now knew hatred in addition to love.
But that did not spell the end of the White Queen's love. But not in the sense of carrying memories of the dead in your heart. Even after what she had done, it had not been snuffed out.
It was true Shiroyama Kyousuke had lost consciousness.
But his heart was beating. His brain remained.
At the very, very last second, something had deflected and diverted the White Queen's attack.
A supernatural being far too graceful to be the Colorless Little Girl spoke to the White Queen.
<…What do you think of this?>
Yes, this was a third being that had not been here before.
They were inside the Artificial Sacred Ground created by Ellie Slide. The laws of the world were bent there so humans of this world and Materials of the other could coexist.
<Are you irritated that your attack did not produce the desired result, or are you relieved that your beloved still lives? Depending on your answer, I may have to rethink my opinion of you.>
"Bro…ther…
Uweaaaaaooooooooaaaaa



It was someone who may have been even closer to him than the White Queen. But most everyone in the current world was unaware of her because she had vanished into the shadows of history.
She was a beautiful woman with a long black ponytail.
She was an educator wearing a long white coat over a tight skirt suit.
She was one of the few good people in this hopeless world.
There was one witness from the past present: Biondetta.
She moved her trembling lips and seemed unable to believe her eyes.
“Shigara Masami…?”
Madam Professor.
Also known as Freedom Award 3000, World Complete.
But was Biondetta aware of that true identity? Was she aware this woman was the true ruler of the Queen’s Miniature Garden who had collected the full set of 1000 Awards each from Government, Illegal, and Freedom?
She had supposedly died deep underground during the Secret War.
But those who had passed Award 1000 could become a being of the other world. In fact, it was strange for them to remain in this world as humans.
Even if she had been trapped underground with no escape, she still could have escaped to the other world.
<You have declined, Queen. You’re a mere shadow of what you once were.>
“…”
<I might be a Material now, but I’m only Divine-class. Simply standing before you should have caused to me to tremble and lose the will to fight, yet I just managed to insolently deflect your attack. But not because I’m special. That attack lacked the purity your white symbolizes. For this brief time, you have grown impure. When you faced me in the Queen’s Miniature Garden, you had resolved yourself to protect Kyousuke-kun even if it drove you insane and even if you were wrong. If you had that power now, you would have blown away the likes of me.>
“But…”
With a quiet sound, the silver twintailed girl revealed her beautiful body to the human world like she was stripping off the Colorless Little Girl.
Her face was crumpled up.
She could not control her emotions and she could allow herself the look of a child on the verge of tears because Kyousuke was unconscious and thus could not see.
“But brother…my brother never said that to me. He chose being right over love. That was who he was. I could endure it because that’s just who he was…”
<Simply enduring it was a mistake.>
But she was rejected.
Shigara Masami stepped outside the trivial categories of Divine-class and Unexplored-class to stand above the Queen.
Her relationship may not have changed since she sacrificed herself to allow a great sinner like Kyousuke to escape the Queen’s Miniature Garden.

She was on a different level as a woman.
<You never confided in Kyousuke-kun or revealed your worries to him. You just agonized over it on your own, made a decision on your own, and destroyed everything on your own. Unlike the Colorless Little Girl, you fled from the courage needed to give voice to your resolve. As so very, very strong as you are, you may have been able to do it. By allowing yourself to break and breaking everything else around you, you may have been able to get Kyousuke-kun up to the surface where he could walk free. But that was running away. You were merely indulging yourself because you couldn't bring yourself to expose your weakness to him.>
"…Then what was I supposed to do?"
This went too far and the emotionless White Queen's meter began to turn once more.
It turned toward the emotion of anger.
"In that garbage dump of a dark underground facility, my perception was distorted so I believed everyone was my beloved brother. What were the *countless mes* supposed to do when we had our love used against us!?"
<That should be obvious.>
Meanwhile, Shigara Masami spoke with pity in her voice.
She slowly shook her head before such a powerful being.
<If you had simply told Kyousuke-kun before you went on your rampage and before you made your decision on your own, the problem would never have gotten so bad. You only had to tell him it was painful, heart-breaking, and disgusting. You only had to tell him you could not forgive yourself for being corrupted like that and that you could not stand it any longer.>
She breathed a heavy sigh.
How had it managed to get so twisted?
She seemed somewhat exasperated by that boy and girl's destiny.
<Or to sum it up: *help me*. If you had just confessed that, you would have been saved.>
She was not allowed to continue any further.
The "White" Queen who Wields the Sword of Unsullied Truth (iu – nu – fb – a – wuh – ei –kx – eu – pl – vjz).
That being seemed to physically swell out from within. The pure white clothing containing her beautiful body rippled and formed countless fearsome weapons: swords, guns, spears, crossbows, axes, spikes, katanas, staffs, hammers, whips, etc. The Queen of two worlds used all of her authority to shut the insolent mouth before her. The twintail girl raised a wordless roar and unleashed absolute resolve from her entire body.
However.
However.
<You are weak.>
The guardian carrying Shiroyama Kyousuke did not hesitate any longer.
<Right now, you are like a hedgehog sticking out all its needles in fear of an unseen enemy. No matter how much power you display, I can see your

shockingly soft underbelly trembling. Retrieve your purity, Queen. The original you – the you that would split the earth in two with a smile if it was for Kyousuke-kun – could slice me in two with a single hair.>
“Shut up…”
<That ugly weakness is not something you should show off to the enemy on the battlefield. That is something you should only open up and reveal to the boy you love more than anything else in the world. You keep saying you love him, but you have not let him see your true self. Kyousuke-kun has cried and screamed until he had worn himself down and he has continued showing off the world’s strongest smile, but how often have you turned away from him while acting so noble? How could you expect him to not misunderstand? It is true Kyousuke-kun is hopelessly stubborn, but you are also to blame since you knew how stubborn he is but you did not work up the courage to patiently explain it to him. Surely you could figure out that much. Didn’t you find it cruel to expose him to the world’s strongest thrashing just because you have a shy maiden’s heart?>
“I said shut uuuu

And she spoke to someone who had similarly *chosen to fight the entire world* for the boy she loved.
White.
What was it that color had represented?
<Kyousuke-kun is *off limits* until you can do that. Queen, you were a global target of worship who was offered anything you ever wanted, so having just one thing out of your reach should provide enough shame and suffering to make each second and instant impossible to bear. Crawl though that endless hunger and thirst, constantly think about the one thing in this world you cannot have, and recall the true feelings in your heart. If you do not, I will forever stand between you and him. Even if he grows old and dies, I will not let you attend his funeral.>
With that said, Shigara Masami relaxed her shoulders.
And she gave a smile that was far too out of place when facing her enemy.
<Don’t worry. A maiden in love has been the strongest force in every age. If you put your mind to it, you can easily clear this hurdle☆>

Facts

- Shigara Masami remained alive by shifting from this world to the other world.
- Freedom Award 3000 was the first person in history to use nothing but words to beat down the White Queen until she could say nothing in response.

Ending X-02: The End of a Rebellious Phase

“Remember what it is you must do.”
“Don’t…worry.”
(Ending X-02 Open 08/04 07:30 “UTC+03 Flanguild time”)
The End of a Rebellious Phase

Was it no more than an incoherent dream?
Kyousuke stared blankly up at heaven and could not get his eyes to focus.
He saw someone’s face there.
They peered down at him.
Someone gently held his limp body. They smelled just like someone who could never be here. Had the Yellow Gills done something? Kyousuke aimlessly accepted this situation he could not logically explain.
A dream was fine.
As long as it meant he could see her smile once more.
<Kyousuke-kun.>
“Hh…ah…?”
<Kyousuke-kun.>
He found it nostalgic.
His actual father was simply the worst. He had no real memories of his mother or his “little sister”. To that boy, the Queen’s Miniature Garden was both a symbol of nightmares and a fond childhood memory. Biondetta and Shiroyama Kyoumi had acted like his big sisters and Shigara Masami had raised him like a parent. No, that was not all. He had not really focused on it much, but when the Queen’s Miniature Garden had collapsed, a great many people had reached out a helping hand out of concern for him. He had not been alone. He had held connections to a lot of people back then.
But.
He could not lose himself in memories.
He still had something to do.
<Are you okay? Are you capable of processing your memories in sequence? >
“Yes…”
Shigara Masami was dead…supposedly.

No matter how much he wished to, he could never speak with her again… supposedly.
<Remember what it is you must do.>
“Don’t…worry.”
After trying to speak, he realized just how little control he had over his body. He may have been seeing an ominous hallucination on the border between life and death.
He tried forcing out his voice.
“I know…what it is…I really, truly…must do…”
<And what is that?>
When asked anew, Kyousuke swallowed the saliva in his mouth.
It was as sticky as glue, so it threatened to seal up his windpipe if he was not careful.
“I…”
<Yes?>
“I…”
<Yes, yes?>
“I will settle things with the White Queen once and for all. And I will save the Colorless Little Girl. If I don’t… If I don’t, I wouldn’t be able to face the changed world or the people who were lost…!!”
<That’s not it at all, you moron. No one wants that.>
He heard a sigh and an oddly raw voice.
And a very real fist struck the top of his head like a small child being scolded.

Facts

- Shigara Masami got carried away and overpowered Shiroyama Kyousuke as well.

Afterword

“……”
“……”
(Postscript Open ??/?? ??:??)
Afterword

And that’s the 8th volume!!
This is Kamachi Kazuma.
This was a world tour battle that crossed the globe, as often seen in the sequel to a popular action movie. A cruise ship, deep under the ocean, space, and the border of the Eastern European Kingdom F. I hope you enjoyed seeing Kyousuke freely hopping all over the world in a single volume.
Kyousuke’s vessel was the same as last time: Olivia Highland. I knew I had to go all out on showing her charm, so I focused on her alone. Before she was possessed and before Bridesmaid left her eyes spinning, Olivia would cling innocently to Kyousuke’s waist like that. …And that is why Kyousuke was so shocked to see a changed Olivia stolen by his father in Volume 7. Oh, dear. Explaining it like that makes dandy Doctor S sound wholly immoral.

The original plan was not to have a Silver Resource War at Kingdom F. I had planned for the war to occur at South America’s Devil’s Island, for the enemy to be the fleet surrounding the island and the marines who had landed on the island, and for the battle to be like a game of beach flags where Azalea Magentarain in a blue swimsuit played the role of the flag. The story is in August and the setting would be an island of everlasting summer, so there would be no reason not to put her in a swimsuit!! Ahem. But anyway, she fit the bill for someone trying to build a Queen lookalike out of Repliglass and being able to write about the “original cute Azalea” freed from the Queen’s contamination seen since Volume 1 was an attractive prospect. But when I was putting Olivia in the spotlight, I knew the final stage had to be the Kingdom F mentioned in Volume 7, so I changed where the space station crashed and ended up with the story you read. Even if it was necessary, visiting a chilly inland mountain doesn’t show off the charm of August at all! What a waste! What a waste of summer break!! …Uuh, I definitely want to retry that Azalea idea sometime. The in-

story calendar is still August 4, so our summer is only just getting started…!!

Olivia was always going to hold the main spot, so the character that got to appear instead of Azalea may have been Sinceria. Kingdom F was mostly just symbolic in Volume 7 (well, that was kind of the point), so did it seem to gain more life to it now that Queen Sinceria and Knight Rachel actually showed up? …Incidentally, simply referring to that mother as the Queen could get her confused with a certain silver twintails, so I tried to make sure it was clear who they were talking about. She did not appear much, but I hope I managed to get the main points in there and cover the whole story.
Now, why is it that parent characters always end up being so strong-willed? In Dengeki Bunko battle series, beautiful older girls or student council presidents tend to be the strongest, so maybe a parent is seen as someone who is completely off the charts of the power ranking. You want a protagonist or heroine's parent to have already saved the world three times over, don't you!?
In the sense of being a guardian, Biondetta and Shigara Masami who showed up at the end also qualify. It might be interesting to compare them to Sinceria. Sinceria casually commits sexual harassment while also never removing the locket containing a picture of her family, so she has drawn a line with Kyousuke who is relatively chaste (for a guy). You could say she's the type to attend a group blind date but only eat the food and not pair up with anyone or that she's the type to casually seduce someone but become disillusioned if they show any serious desire. She's just a really difficult and troublesome character. And since just being complicated would not convey her true thoughts, you can see how she refers to herself as "I", "your/her mother", and "we" when speaking as a woman, mother, and queen respectively. That should tell you how serious she is being about each thing. If she ever changes how she refers to herself in the middle of a sentence, that requires extra attention. You should be able to see how her statements contain more emotion when she scolded Rachel for preparing to die than when she was messing with Kyousuke. I mean, of course she isn't serious about that when she's doing it in front of her daughter!
…Although she takes her daughter's happiness seriously, so she is serious when it comes to getting Kyousuke and Olivia together. You can't let your guard down when she's smiling and talking about herself as a mother and I think that is this character's greatest charm. I hope you enjoyed a complexity different from the White Queen or the Colorless Little Girl.

Meanwhile, Biondetta and Shigara Masami are dangerously close to Kyousuke. That may come from becoming his guardian but not fully becoming a parent.
On that note, what did you think of the standard "shocking twist" at the end? It was different from the "usual" where Kyousuke is essentially folded

up compactly and crushed to death. If anyone was going to utterly overpower the White Queen with words, I knew it had to be her instead of Kyousuke, the equally-powerful Black Maw, or the more powerful but extremely inexperienced Colorless Little Girl. I think that is because Shigara Masami is so very close to him as a guardian and can look down at teenage romantic feelings from a detached perspective. I think Sinceria would have stayed out of it and dodged the issue with nice-sounding words.

The ending may seem extremely harsh, but criticizing the White Queen while Kyousuke was not looking shows how tolerant Shigara Masami is. She lectured her to reveal her weakness but did not just tell Kyousuke herself. She is saying that it would be meaningless unless the White Queen works up the courage to do it herself. I think that is the strength of an adult woman, which has nothing to do with Awards or the Unexplored-class. That would be why “children” like the Queen and Kyousuke are no match for her on a fundamental level. After the Queen execution in Volume 7, I knew this had to be the point where I showed a meeker twintails! I mean, give her enough time afterward and she would be recharged with energy!! So I made use of this greatest opportunity by playing the Shigara Masami card I had been holding in reserve for a while. It isn’t quite the same as the Colorless Little Girl who obeys commands like “wait”, “sit”, and “shake”, but is the naïve idea that the strongest might be obedient (to me alone) a way to make them look cute? That is why Shigara Masami scolded that *tsun tsun* Queen for staying up on her throne without ever stepping down. She’s only making a show of being available while actually keeping her guard far too strict!! …By the way, I compared the White Queen and the Colorless Little Girl there, but they were won over in completely different ways in Volume 8. Which one tugged at your heartstrings more?

By comparing her to Kyousuke who is the strongest yet ends up in tears and essentially crushed to death each time, I think you should have a good idea of how the White Queen is also the strongest but treats everyone coldly. Kyousuke honestly reveals his heart in battle and the Queen was never able to do that. So which of those is strong and which of those is weak? Did Shigara Masami’s reappearance change your opinion about that? And about the Queen indulging herself. Surely you could figure out that much. No, that’s asking too much!! Now that the White Queen has been so shy for so long, will she finally be able to show off all the *dere* she’s built up for so long? No one wants to see that surface-level strongest part. It’s time to test your true courage, Hedgehog Queen.

Oh, I just realized I’ve been talking about the characters instead of the theme and structure of this volume. This is a pretty rare kind of afterword for me.

We've finally reached the 8th volume, so maybe this is a sign that the setting and stage are solidly in place. Or maybe it's because this is a love story that focuses on the relationships between people.

I give my thanks to my illustrator Ikawa Waki-san and my editors Miki-san, Anan-san, Miyazaki-san, Nakajima-san, Yamamoto-san, and Mitera-san. This was another chaotic volume with the stage constantly changing, one legendary god after another, and a new character who is the mother of a previous character, so it must have taken a lot of work. I am truly grateful that you stuck with me to the end!!
And I give my thanks to the readers. How did you like this complicated-looking story that is actually a love story between a boy and a girl? That it was Shigara Masami and not Kyousuke who figured it out was this volume's biggest twist. Lots of misunderstandings is the key to a love comedy! Anyway, I hope you enjoyed the different sort of surprise this time.

And I will end this here.

How did Biondetta manage to steal the show with nothing more than "Squish squish☆"?
-Kamachi Kazuma

Translator's Notes and References

1. ↑ Irigaru Tarou basically means Illegal Boy.